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# The Washington Monthly

JULY/AUGUST 1975/$1.25

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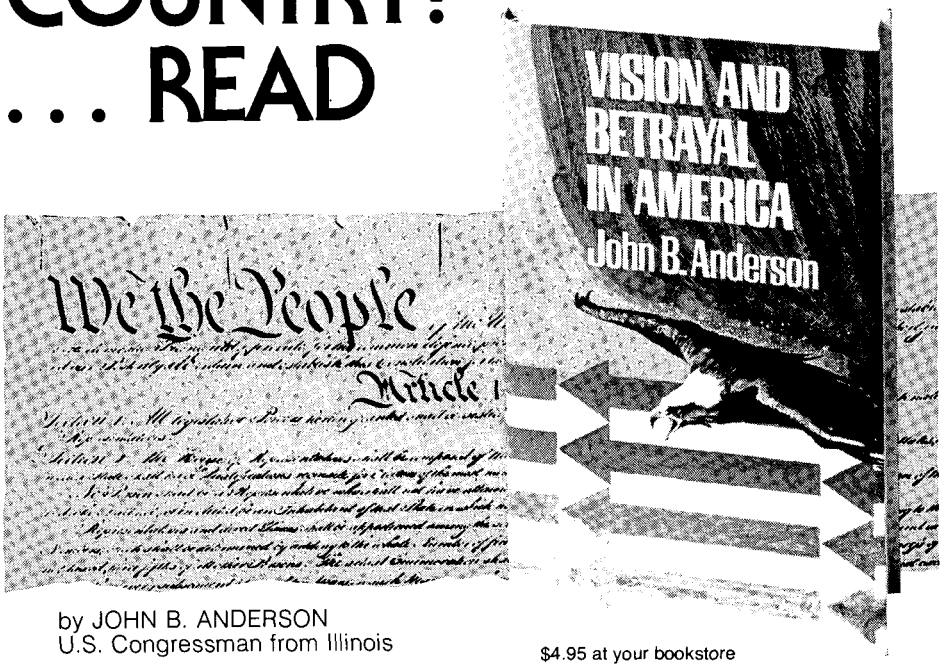


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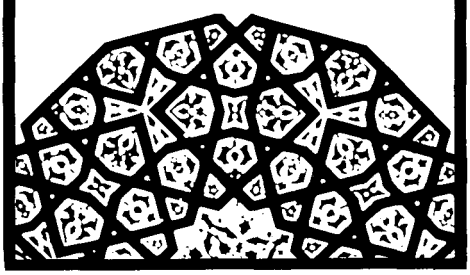



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# Letters

## Ayn Rand

Since reading your appreciative reappraisal of Ayn Rand in the May *Washington Monthly* ["The Gold in the Garbage: What the Left Can Learn From Ayn Rand," by James Fallows] early last month, I've been turning it over a bit in my mind. It seems to me that on several points it warrants at least an attempt at argument.

1. The first and most obvious of these points is your statement (p.59) that: "Ayn Rand is absolutely on target in depicting the contrast between those who plunge themselves into the effort to make something work, be it a novel or a smelter, and those whose most fervent desire is to cover their tails. . . . After a few scenes (from *Atlas Shrugged*) you can begin to understand the businessman, understand why he hates the civil servants in their risk-free world."

I'll grant that humanity can be divided, if you like, into achievers and tail-coverers. I'll even grant, *arguendo*, that "civil servants" fall predominantly into the latter category. But what makes you—or Rand—think that the general run of executives in the private sector is any different? You might take a look at Alan Harrington's *Life in the Crystal Palace* (or William H. Whyte's *The Organization Man*) for a corrective to that notion. Private bureaucracy seems to caponize its servitors every bit as efficiently as public bureaucracy. Possibly a case might be made that small, independent entrepreneurs—as opposed to the executives of large corporations—have a better record for self-reliance and creativity (*cf.* T.K. Quinn, *Giant Business: Threat to Democracy*, or almost any of the writings of Louis D. Brandeis). But, if so, where does that bring you out with respect to the creators of great bureaucracies whom Rand so much admires? (Are the "Taggart Transcontinental Railroads" run by Ms. Taggart all by herself, or is there some management structure, some bureaucracy?) Assuming that the creation of bigness is fulfilling to the creator, is that the kind of fulfillment that the rest of us want to applaud? Are the rest of us reduced by that very creation to the kind of bureaucratic lives that Rand deplores?

2. You say (p. 58) that: "Time and again my heart went out to one of Ayn Rand's titans when, after working an 18-hour day trying to fend off one catastrophe after another, he would run into a smug liberal fresh from reading *Babbitt*."

I guess that before letting my heart go out, I'd like to know just what kinds of problems a businessman is devoting his 18-hour days to solving—and why. For all I know, he might be trying to maximize human inhalation of cigarette smoke, or to facilitate free trade in handguns. These examples, I'm aware, lie at the dark end of a rather long spectrum, but there are plenty of people who do just those things, and I'm not aware of any basis in conventional economic theory (much less in Rand's) for distinguishing between them and any other businessmen, so long as they have enough political clout to keep their businesses from being prohibited by law. A certain proportion of our national product seems to range downward from the merely pointless to the affirmatively pernicious. And some would argue that this proportion is not only large, but in a sense "necessarily" large, that in our highly industrialized economy we run out of useful work long before we reach full employment, and that the business of America—to paraphrase Calvin Coolidge—is largely mere business. . . .

I'm far from sure what the answer to this problem is. It may be that this (or some substitute) system of makework is the best hope we have of reconciling our traditional work ethic with our latter day ability to produce sustained glut without providing full employment.

But it's a long jump from this reluctant recognition that makework has its purposes to the romantic glorification of business and the work ethic that pervades the works of Ayn Rand. I don't think we want to fool ourselves too completely about the social utility of sitting in an office or a lab keeping busy (no matter how imaginatively) on problems whose main significance is that they allow someone to sit in an office or a lab keeping busy. We might do well to keep in the back of our heads an observation that comes from almost as far right on the political spectrum as Rand herself. *Fortune* magazine, in the early days of the New Deal, opined that: "Direct relief is—purely and simply—the Dole. Almost as purely and simply, work relief is the Dole, too, except



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that it does provide a little more self-respect for its recipients: at least it creates for them the fiction that they are still useful citizens and that there is work for them to do." (Quoted in Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, p.57.)

We don't, of course, have to go quite this far and equate the "usefulness" of people as citizens with the availability of "work for them to do." But neither do we have to swallow the fallacy that only the lower orders are ever on "work relief" and that the rest of us–like Rand's titans or *Fortune*'s subscribers–work because society needs our output and rewards us commensurately.

Oddly enough, it's long since dawned in some quarters that society might achieve a net gain if each and all of the bureaucrats in certain government agencies simply failed to come to work in the morning. That idea may even be orthodox analysis in large parts of the Republican Party–to say nothing of Ayn Rand and her disciples, and to say nothing of *The Washington Monthly*. But the thought that the same is true throughout entire thriving industries in the private sector seems to be anathema to everyone, left or right. It's a curious gap in our thinking. . . .

JOHN HELLEGERS
Washington, D.C.

James Fallows argues, in his article on Ayn Rand that the case for the minimal state fails because initial endowments of property, talent, beauty and intelligence are not equal. This assumes that the maximum state acts to offset such inequalities, rather than to reinforce inequalities by distributing favors on the basis of political clout. The public choice theory of how politicians and bureaucrats respond to incentives, as well as a growing body of evidence accumulated by Kenneth Boulding and others, casts considerable doubt on this rather naive view of political reality. Subsidies to agriculture, symphonies, and higher education, for example, clearly soak the poor. Government support of minimum pricing, through regulatory agencies and fair trade laws, does the same. Allowing privileged labor and professional groups to limit entry into their trades, with the help of licensing laws and the like, is another policy to keep the poor in their place. The analysis of Milton Friedman and evidence from Harvard's Martin Feldstein suggest that Social Security and unemployment benefits are regressive in their net impact. The poor aren't eligible for most housing subsidies, which are clearly designed to help builders, bankers, and realtors.

An imperfection in voluntary contractual arrangements does not by itself constitute an argument for substituting the political decision-making process. Governments, after all, are imperfect too.

ALAN REYNOLDS
New York, N.Y.

*Alan Reynolds is a contributing editor of the* National Review.

## Action Lines

Arthur Levine: Bless you. What a marvelous, searching article ["Better Than Deep Throat," April] on Action Lines. . . a reader sent me a copy with the cover note: "I wanted to be sure you see this article. Your column is certainly one of the good guys. . . ." But sad to say, and I have to be honest enough to admit it, I fall into all the same traps you so perceptively outlined.

I can only plead overwork. . . many times we Action Line editors grab the "encyclopedia" questions, the ones that could be answered by a quick trip to the library, only to fill space. While we are "cutting red tape, standing up for people's rights," we are also required to fill space. . . six columns a week. . . if one doesn't have a staff, you take the easy way out.

Personally, I'm handling 200 letters a week, alone–I'm it–researcher, writer, and solver of problems, all by myself. Our readers assume, and we encourage the fiction, that we have a staff of hundreds, with investigators and lawyers standing at the ready. But I try. Almost everything, other than the utmost trivia is answered. What appears in the column is only the tip of the iceberg, as journalists are fond of saying.

We've been the poor step-children of the office for so long, it's good to see an article such as yours, even though you exposed all our warts. Our fellow journalists don't consider what we are doing "journalism" and most of the time we feel like the office pariahs. I've been fighting that kind of indifference for five years and there are times when I'm almost ready to throw in the towel. But we *are* filling a void, so I keep plugging. And if our only contribution is to keep consumer agencies and consumer lawmakers on their toes, then it's worth the effort. . . .

IRENE G. KEENEY
Albany, N.Y.

*Irene G. Keeney is the Action Line editor for* The Knickerbocker News.

*Editor's note:*

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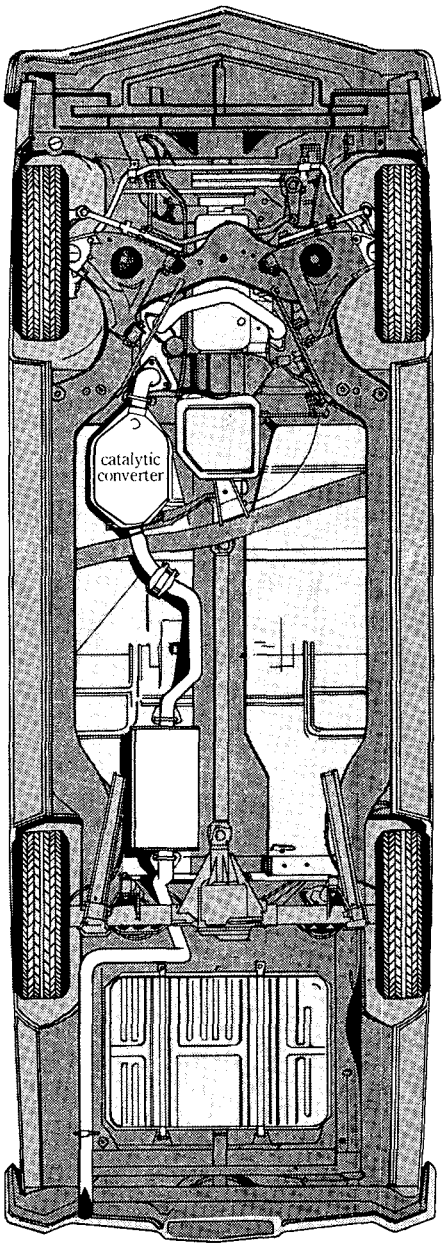


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# Après Henry le Déluge

by Roger Morris

There is a memorable scene, set on a darkening May evening during the *Mayaguez* crisis. Henry Kissinger, standing silhouetted in his West Wing office, glances through the tall windows to notice that some White House reporters have gathered on the driveway outside. They are watching him. To the amusement of his audience, as *Time*'s Hugh Sidey reported later, the Secretary of State pretends to lunge upward toward the window, shedding his coat in Clark Kent fashion before taking flight.

It is Kissinger's self-deprecating, ingratiating wit which breaks the tension, as 10,000 miles away the *Coral Sea* steams toward the Ford Administration's eager little rendezvous with destiny in the Gulf of Siam. But the gesture holds a more serious point and, at this moment, an irony.

*Roger Morris, who formerly worked in the State Department and on the National Security Council staff under Henry Kissinger, is now a Washington writer.*

Probably the most extraordinary diplomat in American history, Kissinger seemed not so long ago really capable of superhuman feats. His patience and rigor nurtured the historic beginnings of serious nuclear arms control. His political insight at home and abroad ended the senseless enmity with Moscow and Peking. His negotiating gifts, now cynical and oblivious to human costs, now sensitive and brilliant, finally extracted U.S. troops and POWs from Indochina and, for the first time in a generation, began promising diplomatic efforts in the Middle East. Behind it all there had to be a mastery of the bureaucratic beast—what Kissinger the scholar once called "administrative stagnation"—that had customarily immobilized policy and consumed so many of Kissinger's predecessors. Growing from that authentic success, fed beyond proportion by an accommodating press and the insatiable public yen for a hero amid the Nixon


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mediocracy, the mythology of "Super K" fastened itself on some surface of the American consciousness.

Then suddenly, like Clark Kent enfeebled by those fragments of kryptonite that used to show up unexpectedly, Kissinger ran into Watergate, new doubts about detente and SALT, dirty tricks in Chile, shabby phone taps on his staff, disaffected clients from Lisbon to Athens to Ankara, impasse in the Middle East, and, perhaps the unkindest of all, an unappreciative 94th Congress. Now there has been the final debacle in Indochina. The "decent interval" of two years since the Paris Agreements and the Nobel Prize was not long enough to ward off the nagging sense that, in the end, Henry was devoured by the war just like all the rest of them.

Inevitably, the talk has begun of Kissinger's resignation, and even of eligible successors. His popularity, his grip on a still-vulnerable President, the weakness of his rivals, all make Kissinger stronger than his immediate setbacks suggest. But even assuming he survives the first Ford Administration, it is clear that the remarkable man who has dominated so much of government since 1969 will soon be gone. Given the stakes, it may not be too early to think about the sort of foreign policy and decision-making we can expect without him.

## B-52s Depart, Bureaucracy Remains

There is a widely held assumption among liberals that things can only improve under a Democratic Secretary of State or National Security Advisor. (Conservatives, on the other hand, worry that even the remaining vestiges of *realpolitik* will be undone by the next regime.) "We're going to see a new era of congressional foreign policy," said one of the many confident House freshmen, a vision relished by Democrats and Republicans alike who seem to share, albeit for different reasons, a distrust of the war mongers and/or detente dupes in the executive branch. Whether one admires or deplores current policy, however, there are serious reasons to question expectations of significant change, or even the wisdom that Kissinger makes a decisive difference in the basic character of foreign policy.

Gone with "Super K" may be a fondness for B-52s as well as a rare genius and style for wheeling and dealing. But left behind, and very much intact, will be an entrenched bureaucracy and foreign policy establishment inimical to authentic reform, a vast practice and policy of more subtle intervention undiminished by the lessons of Vietnam, and an alternating incompetence and co-option in the Congress that mock its pretensions to policy responsibility. These enduring forces offer little which might improve the darker side of the present record, while they can quite easily stifle the creativity, initiative, and improvisation that have been the best of Kissinger's diplomacy. In short, if you generally like the way we now do business with the world, rest easy—although you'll miss the dazzle of the incumbent Secretary of State. And if you are one of those who think things in foreign policy can't possibly get worse, stick around.

## Controlling the Monster

At the heart of Kissinger's most impressive accomplishments was his personal dominance of the bureaucracy. More clearly than most other academic observers, he had seen that in the 1960s the American foreign policy apparatus had become a vast feudal kingdom of bureaucratic agencies and interests, in which, as he wrote acidly in 1961, there was a "powerful tendency to think that a compromise among administrative proposals is the same thing as a policy."

For the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, which flung American power into the "long twilight struggle," the foreign policy bureauc-



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Diana H. Walker

racy became a Frankenstein monster, turning on its supposed masters to smother any movement away from the preservation of each organization's perceived mission and thus kill any major initiatives in policy. There was no more vivid example of this paralysis than the closing years of the Johnson Presidency, when many initiatives, later credited to Kissinger, were raised only to expire in the organizational inertia. Thus SALT might have actually begun at the Glassboro Summit in the summer of 1967—but did not, because U.S. policy at the time was little more than a vague, sullen squabble between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the rest of the government. In a sense, it was easier for Lyndon Johnson to get a paranoid Kremlin to reconsider its strategic force levels than to convince the Pentagon to give our civilian negotiators enough elbowroom to begin genuine negotiations. Similarly, the Middle East crisis and war of 1967 presented opportunities for creative U. S. mediation not unlike those that followed the 1973 conflict. There could be no agreement in the Administration, however, on the nature of long-run American interest in the region, let alone a mediation strategy. So it was with East-West trade, ideas for a world food reserve, and a range of other economic issues. The bureaucratic model for guaranteed decision-making, Kissinger often remarked, was a paper with three options: present policy bracketed by two unthinkable alternatives.

In the center of this system, in spirit if not in power, was (and is) the Department of State. Its Foreign Service had become a careerist guild, nurturing caution and routine, shunning policy responsibility after its searing brush with McCarthyism in the 1950s, and substituting smugness of style for its all but fatal loss of authority. And, as with most guilds, from the modern American union bureaucracy to Xerox to *The New York Times*, the continued relative

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success of the career service, the access of senior officers to top jobs in State, tended to reinforce the compliant, play-it-safe ethic in the ranks. Virtuoso manipulators like Kissinger might bypass the system altogether and leave it to its wooden memos and generous pensions; but if the Department was to be *changed*, and its stultification of policy lifted, that would happen only by changing *people*, bringing in new talent and giving an unmistakable bureaucratic signal that the rules of life had changed.

Briefly—the reality, of course, is richer, more banal, more hair-raising than these paragraphs can possibly convey—that is the system Kissinger inherited shortly after noon on January 20, 1969, not, of course, as Secretary of State, but then as National Security Advisor. He promptly moved to establish personal control through a series of bureaucratic committees. This was the famous National Security Council system, with its Interdepartmental Groups, Review Group, Verification Panel for SALT, Vietnam Special Studies Group, Forty Committee, Washington Special Actions Group for Crisis Control, etc. etc. Out of those carefully structured negotiations in the West Basement of the White House came the solutions to so many deadlocked policies and the creation of so many of the diplomatic glories of the administration, from Moscow to the Sinai. Kissinger manipulated, evaded, and generally overcame the bureaucracy as no other figure before him had, and as no other is likely to for a long time to come.

But he has not *changed* it for his successor. As long as Kissinger controls the State Department, policy-making will bear the stamp of the obsessive secrecy and reliance on a tiny handful of aides that marked his White House operation. Yet the scholar who deplored the State Department system, the National Security Advisor who instantly deprived it of power lest policy atrophy, has left it largely alive and well to bedevil the next regime. There has been no basic reform of the Foreign Service. The ponderous consensus memos from the bowels of bureaucracy are simply ignored, their authors momentarily daunted but unreconstituted.

## The Impracticality of Dissent

Perhaps most telling in bureaucratic terms is the fact that Kissinger's State Department, at the most important assistant secretary level, is almost entirely in the hands of the career service. Outsiders have rarely held so few key State Department positions, bureaucrats so many, as they do now.

Each of these appointments carries a message to the bureaucracy, and the signals are interesting to contemplate for those who believe the government is learning the hard-won, often bloody, lessons of the last decade. For example, the East Asian Bureau has gone to Phillip Habib, whose earlier career was distinguished by his work in charge of public information policies in Saigon. The African Bureau is headed by Nathaniel Davis, former U.S. Ambassador to Chile during the overthrow of Salvador Allende and the first days of the junta. Assistant Secretary in the critically important Economic Bureau is Thomas Enders, former Deputy Chief of Mission at the American embassy in Phnom Penh at the time when the embassy was accommodatingly providing the targeting for the secret B-52 bombing of Cambodia. (According to reports from the scene by William Shawcross of the *London Sunday Times* the targeting was based on a 1:50,000 map several years old that just didn't show new or relocated villages.) The point is not that these men are individually evil or should be denied responsibility in some McCarthyesque purge. All of them seem clearly competent in a technical sense of that word. But their proximity to disastrous and rejected policies, their failure either to sound a public


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disagreement or to refuse to be a party to what was happening, and now their reward with the most coveted offices, this is less than a powerful testimony to the practicality of dissent. Nor does it represent an institutional rejection of the policy habits of the past.

It should have been possible to treat such men fairly in reassignment without the object lessons their appointments now represent. Because of such appointments and persistent neglect of other organizational issues, Kissinger will leave basically unreformed the Foreign Service and foreign affairs bureaucracy that froze policy and extinguished initiative under his predecessors. The State Department will still not know how to maneuver swiftly through the intricacies of a disengagement on the Golan Heights or a secret flight to Peking, but it will be able to exercise its proven capacity to argue, delay, and reduce policy to its common impostor, "administrative compromise."

Given this prospect for Kissinger's successor, what are the odds that he can surmount or reform it himself? What is the chance for infusion of new talent into the foreign affairs bureaucracy from the outside? Not much.

## Yesterday's Men

The most compelling argument against any real departures in foreign policy is the inertia and sameness of the men who are in line to inherit Kissinger's authority. It is depressing to contemplate the way in which we customarily pick our Secretaries of State, who they are, and what and whom they tend to represent. No other cabinet office is so ossified. There have been only five Secretaries of State since 1952: compared to 11 Secretaries of Commerce, ten Attorneys General and Secretaries of Health, Education and Welfare, and nine Secretaries of the Treasury. Selection is a variety of Establishment primogeniture. Before Kissinger there were John Foster Dulles, the New York lawyer; his deputy and New England patrician Christian Herter; State Department super-bureaucrat and Rockefeller Foundation president Dean Rusk; and William Rogers, New York lawyer and former Attorney General under Eisenhower. Not by background or training, not by the manner of their advance to the unexceptionable eligible's list, least of all by any vision or passion to change policy, were any of these men disposed to challenge the norms of policy-making. It was Kissinger himself who saw that the usual lawyers and businessmen of the establishment were not up to the job of holding off the Pentagon and the Foreign Service, as well as the Arabs and the Russians. ". . . Very little in the experience that forms these men," he wrote in 1961, "produces the combination of political acumen, conceptual skill, persuasive power, and substantive knowledge required for the highest positions of government."

Nor is there much evidence that Kissinger's prospective successors escape this disability. The possible Democratic candidates, men like George Ball or Paul Warnke, both former high officials in the Johnson Administration, have no record of bureaucratic virtuosity or diplomatic audacity remotely approaching Kissinger's. And though Democratic candidates frequently criticize Kissinger's policies, the criticisms often seem *pro forma*, and the substantive differences marginal or tactical.

As for the Republican candidates for the succession, the range of names, from Donald Rumsfeld to Elliot Richardson, evokes no better prospect. If anything, despite Kissinger's example, the traditional Republican disdain for the "cookie-pushers" in State has lulled them into an underestimation of the power of the bureaucracy.

Almost all the predictable candidates to be the next Secretary of State are in a substantive sense, as in the words of an old British campaign slogan, "yesterday's men." They will


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have derived much of their formative experience and thinking from the Cold War era in foreign policy, with no guarantee of the historian's vision and perspective that enriched Kissinger. By the same token, many are unlikely to be alive to the new shape of international problems, the energy or food crises, the new resource assertiveness of the poor countries, the pernicious reach of multinational corporations. The difficulty of grasping such realities either politically or technically may put the successor all the more at the mercy of the homogenized views of the bureaucracy, slowing his readiness to act in situations he doesn't understand, and increasing the inertia against administrative reform. Worst of all, the likely successors generally inhabit the same insular, establishment world: the corporate clients, the bland board meetings, the "responsible" discussions at foundation-financed conferences and seminars, the careful jockeying with senators or the potential Presidents, the obsessions with "credibility" and "coolness" and covering all bets. For many, it is a life bounded by incestuous maneuver and information among a relatively tiny group of peers and would-be subordinates. And everywhere the premium tends to be on acceptance and reputation, not independence and iconoclasm, though those are the very qualities we will need most in the man and the office.

Below the highest levels, there seem equally slim chances of change from an influx of in-and-outer middle-level officials, most of whom would hope to join a new Democratic administration. Huddled in its foundation, law firm, and academic resting places, the foreign policy establishment has its own "dirty little secret" of banality. It may be a government-in-waiting, but it is hardly an authentic alternative. Its writings and discussions pose no fundamental questioning of the system, but rather a careful, if largely dull, reiteration of limited policy options, all comfortably within the prevailing orthodoxy. Examples of such substantive gentility abound, visible in the publications of watering holes like Brookings or the Council on Foreign Relations.

No other area of public life has been so little revived with fresh talent and meaningful dissent as foreign affairs. One has only to compare the rippleless Foreign Service and the anxious Washington-New York-Boston hangers-on with the genuine, if limited, transformation made in the law by the infusion of young Legal Services lawyers—or to compare the foreign policy "opposition" with the young reformers reaching for power in the labor movement, or the alternative journalism with its influence on the establishment press.

The problem is not only, as Sam Rayburn once warned Lyndon Johnson, that people like Dean Rusk have never run for sheriff, although the political myopia of the foreign policy establishment in that sense is legendary. Like the tsarist or Manchu bureaucracies, the small foreign affairs elite, 3,000-4,000 people from top to bottom, recognizes only one constituency—itself. It promotes, demotes, certifies, ostracizes, shields, brands, and, most of all, decides what it thinks largely from *within*, little affected by new ideas that are not conventionally "safe" in career terms. A group of people intent on occupying a small pinnacle of power, it often tends to view public policy as a means, not an end.

The practical results of all this—the bureaucratic veto against unconventional leadership, the careerist sterility of the foreign policy elite both in and out of power—were felt acutely under Lyndon Johnson. But they are palpable even now in the areas, notably economics, where Kissinger lacks his usual preeminence. The bickering between State, Treasury, and Agriculture is not a symptom; it is a major cause of the absence of meaningful initiative, and it is indicative of the future in several other issues without Kissinger.



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## Private Foreign Policy

If bureaucratic malaise is likely to descend over much of foreign policy, however, there is one central thrust of our *Pax Americana* that has traditionally been beyond the control of bureaucrats and their Cabinet-level bosses, and thus will probably continue as if Henry Kissinger (and the Vietnam war) had never happened. This is the growing economic involvement of the U.S. with the rest of the world, through the power of global corporations, the booming arms trade, and American business' near-monopoly control over surplus food grains in an age of imminent famine. In a real sense, this is foreign policy *without* the government, but the very absence of purposeful government control and regulation over multinational firms, the arms merchants, and the food market is a decisive act of policy.

The sheer size of these phenomena is by now familiar and needs little elaboration. GM, we now discover, has sales worth more than the Gross National Product of Pakistan or South Africa or Switzerland. Richard Barnet and Ronald Muller, in their book *Global Reach*, report that the top 298 U.S.-based firms earn 40 per cent of their net profits abroad.

There is, of course, nothing inherently wrong with America's economic interrelationship with the rest of the world; nor, at this stage in history, do the far-flung productive and financial networks, commanding economies of specialization and scale, seem avoidable or dispensable. Our international trade and investment abroad can, and often do, have enormous benefits for other countries, from better health to the gradual breaking down of the social and economic barriers that repress millions. But if our involvement is inevitable, what kind of involvement do we want it to be? What should be its limits, what should be its broad public purposes for this nation and for others? The model is now an ITT scheming to protect its profits by overthrowing a freely elected government in Chile, or a Northrop charged with bribing Arab officers to buy weapons, or corporations in Latin America that acquire and variously protect their stakes in a minimally educated, cheap, politically suppressed labor supply, of the kind Gulf+Western enjoys in the Dominican Republic, or United Brands elsewhere in Central America.

The question is not whether America will play a major role in the world, but whether corporate giants, operating beyond public scrutiny or control, will make millions of people believe that America is synonymous with unprincipled pursuit of profit and attendant social-political repression. The issue is also whether those same corporations will use the power they acquire over our *own* economy to suck our national policy into a defense of their exploitation. The answers to those questions are all too evident in a score of places around the world.

In addition to this sort of involvement in the post-Vietnam world, we are also far and away the world's largest arms merchant, our $86 billion in military sales and aid since 1950 more than twice the Soviet arms trade. Though roughly half of this has gone to presumably legitimate NATO defense purposes, American weapons are used for dubious purposes by both sides in the Middle East, and by Greece, Spain, Taiwan, and most recently and lavishly, in Iran, to name only the most important countries. Sales projections, like the stock market in the twenties, are up, up, up.

In coming years, we must also determine the impact of the United States' and Canada's control of most of the world's food reserves, which confers on us a greater monopoly over food than the Arabs have in oil. By the 1980s, according to a recently-leaked CIA study on world food supplies, this control could give the United States, or at least the tiny part of it that rules the food market, "life and death" power over the growing


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list of hungry countries. As the arms trade is dominated by a few enormous corporations, such as Chrysler, General Electric, or Northrop, food is grown, transported, stored, priced, marketed, and made available for humanitarian purposes (after commercial sales, of course) largely under the control of a few enormous agribusiness firms, such as Ralston-Purina, Continental Grain, and Cargill.

The point, again, is not that we should stop growing grain to eschew this influence, but that our foreign policy has not even begun to touch these vast machines that shape so much of our international relations by decisions made behind the closed doors of corporate boardrooms.

Like the origins of Vietnam, the wellsprings of this vastly wider intervention by corporate greed, arms traffic, and food manipulation are solidly bi-partisan. It was the Johnson Administration, for example, that organized a Pentagon military sales promotion operation and raised it to a high art in the name of balance of payments. In any event, to expect the conventional foreign affairs bureaucracy or Secretaries of State, who tend to be Wall Street lawyers, to confront the potential abuses of this system is probably idle fantasy. Not even "Super K" has tried to play in that league, although the corporations burned him badly on the Soviet wheat deal in 1972.

## No Hope from the Hill

Bureaucracy ascendant, a new computer imperialism rampant—surely there is saving hope in the Congress that ended the war, trimmed arbitrary presidential power, and seems now to assert itself so confidently. Again, don't bet on it. The recent congressional bath in the *Mayaguez* crisis showed all too clearly that the anti-Vietnam impulse in the War Powers Act and anti-bombing legislation was just that—a prohibition against land reinvolvement in Southeast Asia—and not an anti-militarist or even anti-imperial surge.

The Congress seems scared to assert even its limited role in foreign affairs. Besides *Mayaguez*, there have recently been other telltale signs—the reversal of the Turkish military aid cut-off, the defection of liberals like Senator Walter Mondale from support of the Mansfield amendment to cut troops in Europe. In part, it is the mystique of national security. The same men who can thread their way through the complexities and political perils of housing policies or education or economic issues still shrink from foreign policy. With few exceptions, like Senators Joseph Biden and Gary Hart or Representative Les Aspin, younger members generally do not seek the Foreign Relations or Armed Services Committees.

There is also a psychological and personnel problem, which no one quite wants to acknowledge. In a recent issue of this magazine, Frederick Poole described the exodus to Capitol Hill of many former Foreign Service Officers who in their new jobs as legislative assistants and committee investigators have challenged executive policy. More often, however, former FSOs who move to the Hill seem to see themselves as still very much part of the "club." A reading of the speeches and legislation they have written on foreign policy over the last five years or so will uncover no hidden revolutionary impulse at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue. The dominant ethic for many Hill foreign policy aides is to return to or enter "government," by which they mean the *real* government of the State Department or the NSC, a goal which enfeebles them with caution much as it does their peers in law firms, foundations, or teaching jobs.

## Conquering Fudge and Folly

There should be a deepening sense in the Capital and the country, unobscured by little gun-boat reversions like *Mayaguez*, that foreign policy—and with it literally the fate of millions—is less and less within our



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grasp, whether we are conservative or liberal. The great foreign policy problems of the 1970s and 1980s are largely other nations' domestic problems—land reform, population growth, technological change—and cannot be solved by conventional diplomacy. Not even the charm and persuasion of a Kissinger can get the Indian government to grant land reform in Bihar when that land reform threatens the ruling party, or the intransigent Brazilians to adopt population control, or the Europeans (not to mention the U. S.) to transform their societies and economies to escape permanent bondage to petroleum.

Yet if the time of Nobel Prizes is past for a while, there remain awesome opportunities for government. Kissinger's successors *could* pursue effective public control of unpoliced corporate power abroad and call a halt to the bloody, entangling profits of the arms trade. There could be a concerted executive and congressional initiative to regulate the food market and break the power of the agribusiness concerns. The issue ends, as it begins, always with people. Our foreign policy is venal or inept or unimaginative or career-crazed in large part because its practitioners carry those flaws to some degree or another.

What would happen if the next Secretary of State were a Rural Legal Services attorney from California with *no* foreign affairs experience *or* ambitions, rather than a Wall Street or Washington mogul whose life's dream is confined pretty much to having his portrait on the seventh floor of the State Department? What if the next President barred Treasury, the Pentagon, and Agriculture from making foreign policy, then pensioned half the Foreign Service, assigned the other half to oversee the entire foreign aid budget in the world's 15 poorest countries, and hired anew 1,000 Americans below the age of 50 to serve a limited tenure of two to three years doing the best job they could to represent, report, and recommend sensible innovations in foreign policy? An irreplaceable loss of experience? World War III? Or the more likely response of America on the eve of its bicentennial celebration of revolution: "But you just can't do that."

Nor need the trade-off be, as many cynics suggest, the Wall Street mediocrity or Council on Foreign Relations coziness *versus* the George Wallace-variety amateurism that yearns to lob grenades into the men's room in the Kremlin. Two generations and much greater sophistication this side of George Wallace are people who are directing and learning from operations in drug rehabilitation, land reform litigation, insurance fraud investigations, primary election campaigns, welfare rights movements, and a host of similar actions where the politics and diplomacy are as delicate as anything Kissinger and Gromyko ever encountered. The foreign policy elite, and journalists who get their stories from them, can't afford to admit that, of course, largely because the phony mystique is job security, if not much else. But it is true. There are several thousand Americans out there to whom we could entrust foreign policy. Until we are willing to try them, we'll go on suffering the same old fudge and folly.

At any rate, it's harder and harder to imagine how things could look much worse. Foreign affairs in the United States in 1975 is roughly where the domestic private economy was in 1931, dimly understood, widely believed the sacrosanct province of a few calcified experts, beyond the control of the public interest, and about to bring us all to the brink of unprecedented disasters.

"The irrevocable error," wrote a younger and less co-opted Henry Kissinger in 1956, "is not yet part of the American experience." He is still right, even after Vietnam and Watergate. But unless we move now to take a radical new look at foreign affairs, and plan some sweeping reforms for the next round, ex-Secretary of State Kissinger will probably have to omit that observation from his memoirs. ●


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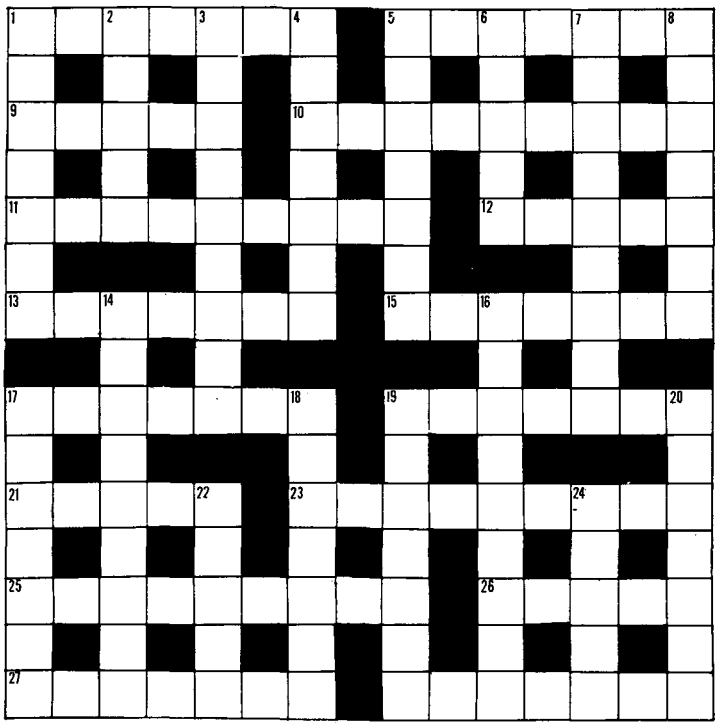
# the political puzzle

by John Barclay



**Across**

1. Ripper offspring out for White House? (7)
5. Another seeker to make a call we arrange. (7)
9. To articulate in something evil. (5)
10. Choices from the Spanish notices upset. (9)
11. Cleared away meager dwelling in winter vehicle. (9)
12. Precedes scout and follows spread. (5)
13. Streakers upset industries without ire. (7)
15. Flow back particle version. (7)
17. Simpler pile ran. (7)
19. Gambling game burns me. (7)
21. Certain concepts, for example sad, confused. (5)
23. Unequivocal feather privilege? (9)
25. Playful tune from April and Commerce Commission in union. (9)
26. Vision from a gem I fractured. (5)
27. White House aspirant without TV offspring? (7)
28. Candidate? Not Edward in key district. (7)

**Down**

1. Baptist offspring twice in White House? (7)
2. River in Rubicon gorge. (5)
3. Neon vests tried twice for White House. (9)
4. Needlessly short phonograph components. (7)
5. Cajole the West heedlessly short. (7)
6. Machine tool found in flathead screw factory. (5)
7. Make a glad noise together. (9)
8. Oriental enters a composition. (7)
14. Pain pride makes little one uncomfortable. (6,3)
16. Placed underwater, is mime upset? No, sir! (9)
17. Albert, Edward, or William, for example. (7)
18. Communist Duce arranged and cut down to size. (7)
19. Know rye? It's broke! (7)
20. The boys who joined Parke-Bernet. (7)
22. No tears up for ex-number two. (5)
24. Rather large blinding light. (5)

*The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g., (2, 3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g., USA, are treated as one word.*
*Answers to last month's puzzle are on page 50.*

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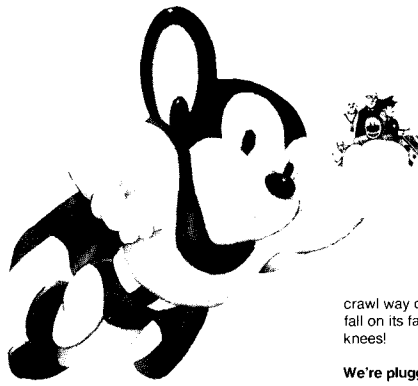
# New Times.

# Think of us as the Mighty Mouse of magazines.



Superman we are not.

But that doesn't mean NEW TIMES isn't busting evil in the chops, fighting for the little guy, stripping the pants off phonies and generally shaking hell out of the establishment.

Like Mighty Mouse, we are small but powerful feisty. Out of all proportion to our size, we make waves. Strike fear in evil hearts. Give the tremble to fat cats. Shake the rafters. The Mouse that Roars, that's us.

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Every two weeks, NEW TIMES comes along with a stick or two of dynamite in its fist.

There was our story on "The Ten Dumbest Congressmen," with NEW TIMES' nomination for King of Dumb. You should have heard the screams on that one, including a well-attended

press conference called by the King himself. There was "Prescription Payola," about doctors who are willing to risk your life for a color TV. There was "Southie Is My Home Town," a look at the people of South Boston you didn't find in any of the other media. (After a century of getting the shaft, maybe they had reasons for coming off as brawling racists.)

In "The Little Camera that Couldn't," NEW TIMES dissected Polaroid's SX-70, as a symbol of a consumer economy gone wild. In "A Wallace Is a Wallace Is a Wallace," we looked underneath the new moderate George and found—guess what—the same old George. In "Happy Days Are Here Again," we saw the new depression as upbeat—a chance for new lifestyles and the whole Whole Earth thing. In "Zen and the Art of the Perfect Backhand," we told you how to trust your body and ignore your old tennis instructor.

"The Gourmet Freeze-Out" ripped the foil off the big restaurant rip-off that's serving up mass-produced frozen dishes as expensive house specialties. "The Consulting Con Game" laid bare a cushy professorial racket. "They Shoot Ten-Year Olds, Don't They?" was a heartwarming look at New York's shootin' cops with their 007 license to kill just about anybody they want to. "That Championship Season" stripped the cover-up from the sex scandal that decimated Notre Dame's football team.

**Is NEW TIMES mad all the time?**

Golly, no. Don't get the idea we do nothing but dredge up embarrassing facts and tweak important noses. NEW TIMES is *the magazine of what's happening* and that's a spectrum that includes love and music and lifestyles and movies and all manner of rare new ideas. For instance, we reported on Erhard Seminars Training (est), one of the most fascinating of the new life therapies. We got inside the world of bisexuality. We published our *own* medical research on pot—"Attention: Smoking Grass May Be Good for Your Health."

And of course we continue to report on the eternal battle of The Little Guys vs. The Big Guys. Like the story on Sam Lovejoy, who toppled the big bad nuclear tower. And the young hillbillies of Mendocino County who were

damned if they'd let their houses be torn down for lack of city plumbing.

Our bright, brash, talented writers and columnists—like Robert Sam Anson, Jesse Kornbluth, Marcia Seligson, Larry King, Amanda Spake, Jim Kunen, Mark Goodman, Frank Rich, Janet Maslin and Nina Totenberg—have one thing in common. They're unafraid. They'll plunge into anything, take chances and stands, crawl way out on limbs. Sure, NEW TIMES may fall on its face sometimes. But never on its knees!

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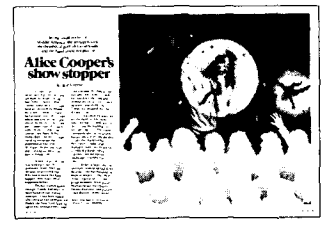


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The Mouse that Roars

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# Open Files: Letting Exxon In

by Thomas Redburn

No piece of legislation has ever reached the altar with a richer dowry of good-government approbation than the Freedom of Information Act, known in government circles as the FOIA. It was embraced publicly by nearly every politician with a fervor previously reserved (in the days before population explosion) for celebrations of motherhood. The struggle was long, beginning way back in the late 1950s, when the issue was first raised, to 1966, when John Moss of California forced the first information act through Congress, up to 1974, when a fearless legislative branch overrode President Ford's veto to add new teeth to the FOIA; and at every stage the air was thick with praise. A typical example comes from Ralph Nader's Freedom of Information Clearinghouse: "Information is necessary to determine whether the government is protecting the public interest. Access to such information is the lifeblood of a democracy, and if it does not flow to the citizenry, democracy withers."

If the results of the Freedom of Information Act have not completely lived up to these high sentiments, they have, at least, opened a few little cracks in the edifice of government operations. Nader and his own associates have used the Act repeatedly to pry documents and data out of recalcitrant agencies and have brought lawsuits which have set precedents in interpreting the law. A handful of newspapers, theoretically among the principal beneficiaries of the law, have bestirred themselves to file requests for information their reporters were denied. Most recently, private citizens have sent their cards and letters streaming into Washington demanding to find out what the FBI and the CIA may be hiding from them in the files.

Yet despite all the good it has done, the Freedom of Information Act has also had consequences rather different from those advertised by its sponsors. Just as freedom of the press is, in Liebling's phrase, guaranteed only to those who own one, freedom of information has been guaranteed mainly to those who can hire high-powered lawyers to Indian-wrestle the government into submission. The mixed results of this well-intentioned act add another small chapter to the majestic saga of the American law. They also suggest that Congress could take a second look at the fine-sounding reform bills it periodically deigns to pass.

After the more restricted, original

*Thomas Redburn is an editor of* The Washington Monthly.



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act was passed in 1966, comparatively few people tried to take advantage of it. Even so, moans went up from bureaucracies all over Washington, as civil servants complained about the crushing burden of the Act. The burden most often mentioned was that imposed by over-curious Nader's Raiders and other public-interest zealots, who were bogging down the government with limitless requests for secret information. Thousands of man-hours were invested in the fight to determine whether the most innocuous government memo should be classified confidential or not. Agencies resorted to a variety of backhanded methods in an attempt to keep the public-interest people away from the government's hoards of data. They grew ever more creative in interpreting the several categories of "exemptions" which, under the provisions of the 1966 Act, permitted certain kinds of information to remain secret. The bureaucrats' intransigence on this point was part of the reason the 1974 amendments, which greatly limited the exemptions, sailed through the Congress.

But as soon as these new amendments went into effect, the moans arose anew, this time primarily for a different reason. The tales of terrible burdens were there again; it seemed that hundreds of overworked civil servants were nailed to their desks as they coped with the FOIA crisis. This time, however, the burden was imposed not by the insatiable Naderites but by Washington's large law firms and the corporations they represent. Fairly trampling down the few public-interest representatives, the handmaidens of the nation's concentrations of economic power rushed to take advantage of a new twist in the government-business game.

There are several types of requests, with different effects. One category of requests comes from corporations trying to discover the trade secrets of their competitors. These have been especially prevalent at the Food and Drug Administration, which, because it must approve applications for new drugs and food additives, has enormous amounts of secret commercial information in its possession. The chairman of the FDA, Alexander Schmidt, announced in June that eight out of ten requests coming into his agency were from corporations—and a great number of these, apparently, from companies trying to find out what their competitors were up to. Theoretically they will not find out, for the Act contains a provision exempting trade secrets and confidential financial data from


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public disclosure. But this provision has not kept companies from trying. One reason they consider the effort worthwhile is that a new provision of the law requires the government to decide within ten days after a request is made whether it will release the information or withhold it. Hopeful that, in the rush to answer a complicated information request within a limited time, a secret will slip out by mistake, the corporations have inundated the courts with lawsuits. "What's wrong with that?" asks Mark Green of the Corporate Accountability Research Group. "We think that if companies are going after each other's secrets, it can only enhance competition."

It is in another of its effects that the Act has more profoundly backfired, and that has happened when the corporations take on the government rather than squabble among themselves. The most dramatic illustration has occured at the Federal Trade Commission, which, like the FDA, is uniquely susceptible to this kind of suit. Under its recently invigorated management, the FTC has become one of the tougher regulatory agencies (considering the competition, this, of course, is modest praise). It spends most of its time conducting investigations of various industries, and many of these investigations lead to lawsuits and complaints.

Soon after the new provisions went into effect in February 1975, officials at the FTC began to realize that they were receiving an unusual number of requests for information under the FOIA. Moreover, the requests were not at all what was expected. In 1968, the FTC itself had been the target of the original Nader's Raiders project and was constantly coping with public interest requests. Now the flood came not from the FTC's critics, but from the corporations.

In the old days, the FTC would conduct its investigations in secret; then if it did file a suit against a company, the company's lawyers were required to use the time-consuming and elaborate legal process of "discovery" to find out what goods the FTC had on them. Within the corporate world, someone quickly figured out that the FOIA could serve as a shortcut to discovery, and many companies filed requests in an effort to find out how far the government investigators had gone. Exxon, for example, filed a FOIA case to learn about the FTC's study of vertical integration in the oil industry. The Washington law firm of Covington and Burling made sure to cover every base by filing a blanket FOIA request on all the cases its corporate clients had pending before the FTC. Several other lawyers who were interviewed said that they had not yet used this quickie discovery method, but would not hesitate to if the circumstances were right.

## Relief from the Court

The overall results haven't exactly turned upside down the history of the government's relationship to its supplicants. Of the 91 cases in 1975 in which the FTC has decided to turn over the requested information, ten came from public interest groups, reporters, newspapers, and the like. All the rest were from corporations and their legal counsel. To name just a few: Kirkland and Ellis asking for documents concerning their client, Polaroid; the American Association of Advertising Agencies requesting a 1971 study on the relationship between advertising and drug abuse; a request from a number of law firms for the files on an investigation of the plastics industry.

Quite recently, the Supreme Court stepped into the arena to offer a bit of relief for the FTC. On April 28 the Court ruled that government officials faced with FOIA requests can exercise a degree of discretion that might thwart the "discovery" ruse. In *NLRB v. Sears, Roebuck,* the Court said that agencies henceforth could distinguish between "pre-decision" material, the sort of evidence on which a lawsuit



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might later be based, and "post-decision" material, the files illuminating why the government chose a certain course of action. Under the law, the "post-decision" documents must generally be made public; but the agencies may use the "pre-decision" classification to prevent the targets of an investigation from sabotaging it. That, at least, is the feeling of people now working with the law, most of whom admit that the effect of the FOIA will not be clear until the substantial amount of litigation now under way is decided one way or another.

## Fraudulent Fairness

Like the campaign reform laws, which were supposed to make politics clean but in many cases made it harder to knock off incumbents, the well-intentioned Freedom of Information Act illustrates some of the difficulties of proposing simple answers to the more complicated questions about the balance of power between industry and government, and citizen and state. In the short run, the one clear beneficiary of the system is the legal profession, which has a whole new category of litigation opened up to it. With the law schools producing thousands of extra lawyers each year, the profession may well be greeting the muddled language of many reform laws with the same sense of relief and pleasure medieval scholars must have felt toward the ambiguities of the Bible.

In the longer run, the Freedom of Information Act illustrates the difficulty of trying to redress the balance of legal power without altering the spurious "fairness" of the adversary system of justice. It is, of course, only "fair" that Exxon and its brothers should be able to take advantage of the Act, just as it is "fair" that John Connally should have been able to hire Edward Bennett Williams to get him off the hook. This is the glorious impartiality of the American legal system, which says that any man who can afford to hire Edward Bennett Williams will get a good defense—and that a few lucky indigents, who happen to have one of the good public defenders assigned to them, will have a chance, too. So it is with the Freedom of Information Act: anyone who can afford to have his Washington powerhouse law firm breathing down the FTC's neck, or who happens to work for Ralph Nader, will have a wonderful chance of having his "freedom of information" recognized. As for the rest of us. . . well, it often does not seem worth the bother.

Laws like the Freedom of Information Act are undoubtedly steps in the right direction; the fact that large economic powers benefit by them should not necessarily reduce their value to the people who originally sponsored them. But the recent experience with the Act suggests that the next time we're ready to "open up the government" or "give some power to the little guy," the first priority might be to find an escape route from the trap of adversary justice. ■


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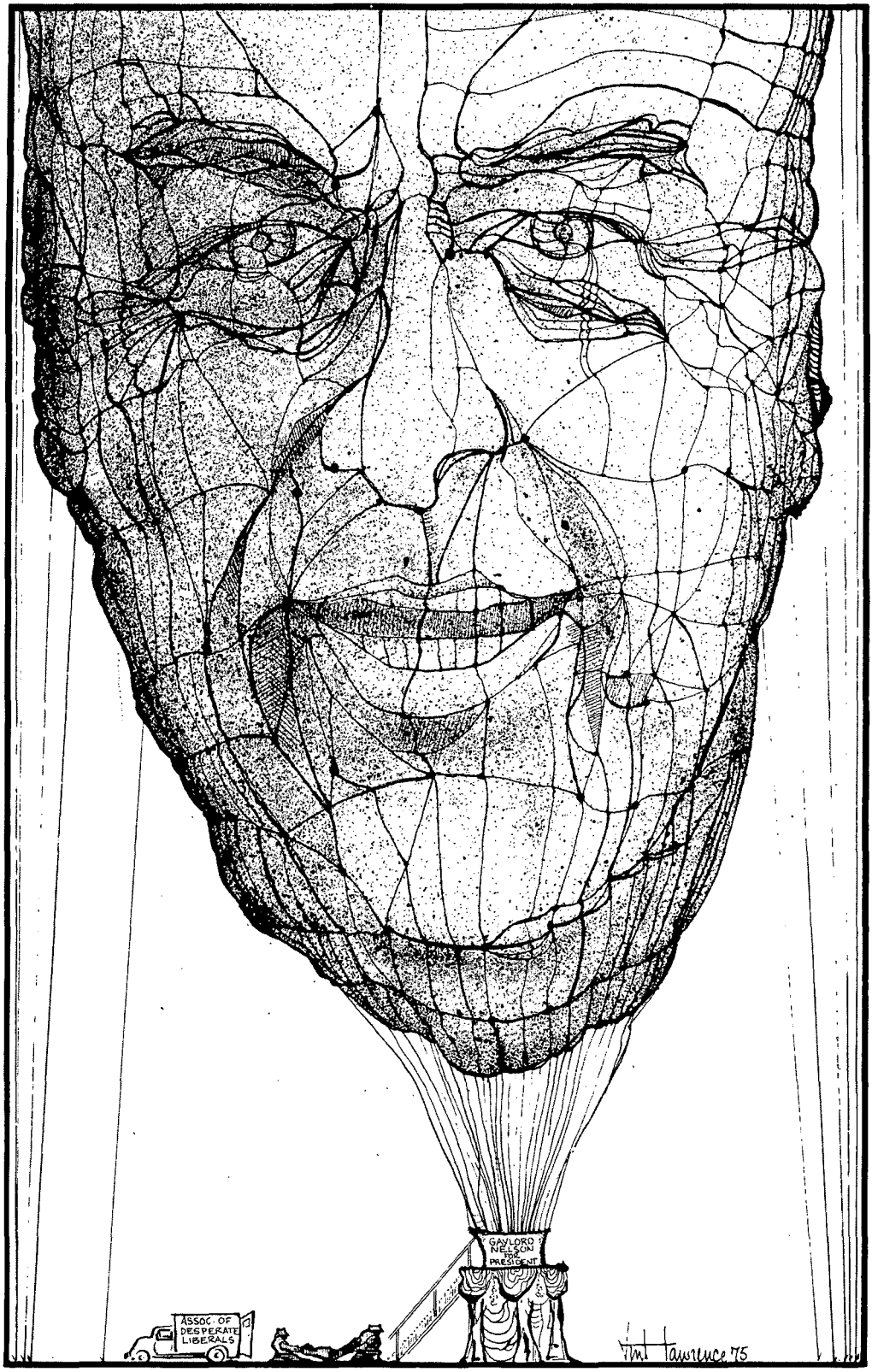


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# Gaylord Nelson and the Myth of the White Knight

by Walter Shapiro

The *Mayaguez* crisis provided Gaylord Nelson with the kind of exposure most Democratic presidential candidates would swap half their entourage for. While everyone else was rallying around the flag, Nelson had the presence of mind to raise the right questions. The day after President Ford sent in the Marines, Nelson said simply and forthrightly that he believed that absolutely no "vital interest was at stake to justify such a precipitate and violent response."

Although Nelson's position was unusual during the week of the crisis, in hindsight its wisdom won him the praise of many leading columnists. Mary McGrory portrayed the Wisconsin Senator as a courageous public servant "berated by his constituency" for refusing to take a jingoistic stand. *Washington Post* columnist Tom Braden, who generally only gushes over Nelson Rockefeller, devoted a whole column to praising Nelson for following Adlai Stevenson's dictum of "talking sense to the American people." Anthony Lewis of *The New York Times* likened the incident to the Gulf of Tonkin and hailed Nelson as "the outstanding voice of reason and proportion."

In an effort to win this sort of acclaim, the average liberal senator assembles a staff of top-flight foreign-policy consultants poised to dispense statesmanlike advice during a crisis. For Gaylord Nelson, this hero's role came almost by accident. Nelson's statement wasn't deliberately calculated to galvanize a national movement; it was made largely to satisfy the Wisconsin papers who had been badgering him for a reaction. For most public figures such national exposure would be linked with some sort of ambition for higher office. But for Gaylord Nelson it was another brief flurry of attention which soon gave way to the low profile which has characterized his 12-year career in the Senate.

*Walter Shapiro is an editor of* **The Washington Monthly.**

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This lack of apparent ambition is characteristic of Nelson. Back in 1970, he was the originator of Earth Day and had an opportunity to become the political incarnation of the entire ecology movement. Nelson danced in the limelight for a moment, following a whirlwind schedule of appearances at college campuses around the country. On the first anniversary of Earth Day, he made another college tour. He even allowed the publication of a small book featuring some of the youthful correspondence he received about the environment, modeled after *Children's Letters to God.* But there was no pattern to these efforts, no master plan, and soon Nelson's connection with Earth Day was largely forgotten. Nelson was even more adamant about ducking the spotlight in 1972 when George McGovern made him his second choice (after Ted Kennedy) for vice president. Nelson, of course, declined, explaining recently, "When I told George 'no' I exaggerated a little. I said my wife would leave me. Hell, I needed some excuse." A year later Nelson turned down an opportunity to become a national celebrity by spurning an invitation from Sam Ervin to serve on the Watergate Committee.

After Richard Nixon, a lack of personal assertiveness has become a quality we find attractive in national leaders. This mood found its symbol last November when Walter Mondale dropped out of the presidential race because he couldn't stomach spending the next two years in motel rooms living out of a suitcase. Mondale's withdrawal touched off an avalanche of praise for his candor in dramatizing the pointless brutality of the quest for a presidential nomination. More than seven months later, Mondale's farewell statement still hovers over the Democratic Party. None of the candidates currently seeking the nomination has aroused much enthusiasm, and one reason for this curious lassitude is that they have somehow become tarred by the very act of seeking the office.

The problem has so affected active candidates that Morris Udall felt obligated to meet it head-on in an article written for *The New York Times* in late May. Udall tried to explain how his desire for the presidency was different from the sort of naked ambition so recently displayed by Richard Nixon. Although Udall struggled manfully, it wasn't easy. Since personal ambition is now suspect, Udall had to make his case entirely in idealistic terms. Other than expressing the predictable "desire to help a troubled nation," the best that Udall could come up with were a few comments about being motivated by "the kind of ambition. . . [that] drove my father to study law by mail and. . . drove my mother to dream for, to work for, a better life for the Hopi Indians." What Udall failed to overcome was the Mondale Paradox: anyone who is willing to run for President is temperamentally unsuited for the job.

This dilemma explains the current enthusiasm for candidates who might be drafted, kicking and screaming, by a Democratic convention. Only with such a compromise candidate is there the possibility of nominating someone who has not been tainted by the very process of seeking the nomination. This magazine has shared in these attitudes. In March we published "All the Presidential Men" by Paul Clancy, which listed eight reluctant congressional Democrats who seem to have the ability and the imagination to serve as effective presidents. In a sense, the Clancy article was designed to be a shopping list of dark horses for delegates at a deadlocked convention. Heading the list of potentially attractive candidates was Gaylord Nelson, whom Clancy described as "one of the least likely to run, and at the same time the man regarded by many as the most suited for the job."

Even before the *Mayaguez* incident there were others who saw Gaylord Nelson as the ideal reluctant candidate for 1976. In late January, Arthur Schlesinger, writing in *The Wall Street Journal*, said, "If Senator Gaylord

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Nelson, who was an admirable governor before he became a wise and effective senator, were to offer himself, he would instantly command wide support throughout the party, but he remains obstinately resistant." In an interview in April, Wisconsin Governor Pat Lucey said that at the end of last year he had failed in an attempt to convince Nelson to run for President. This was about the same time that the *Madison Capital-Times*, the leading liberal voice in Wisconsin, tried to promote Nelson with a front-page article headlined, "Nelson Presidential Bid Pushed." Among those listed as part of an "informal coalition of state and national Democratic leaders and labor union executives" backing a Nelson campaign were William Fulbright, Leonard Woodcock (who immediately denied any involvement), the head of the Wisconsin AFL-CIO, and several figures long active in state politics. Nothing materialized, but one of those involved, former state party chairman David Carley, said later that he had been on the verge of organizing a Nelson for President Committee when he was dissuaded by a phone call from Nelson himself.

Part of Nelson's appeal is, of course, his deep and sincere reluctance to be a candidate. He has grown adept at discouraging such speculation with comments like, "If I ever said what I really think, it would scare the hell out of people so much, it wouldn't get me anywhere." But this becoming modesty is only part of Nelson's appeal. He is also a man who was right on the crucial issues of the last decade—Vietnam and the environment—and was right early enough to give him a reputation as a prophet. For those wanting executive experience, Nelson was a strong and effective governor of Wisconsin from 1959 until he entered the Senate in 1963. Not only was he asked to run for vice president in 1972, but later he also played the sensitive role of an honest broker between McGovern and Tom Eagleton. Nelson's Senate voting record has been almost impeccable by ADA standards. He even holds the unique distinction of having opposed the confirmations of Henry Kissinger, Jerry Ford, and Nelson Rockefeller.

On paper, Gaylord Nelson seems to be the ideal liberal dark-horse presidential candidate for 1976, the kind of nominee who might give smoke-filled rooms a good name. For this reason alone, Gaylord Nelson is worth examining in some detail. But there is a larger question involved as well. And that is the validity of the Mondale Paradox. Are the kind of candidates who would never dream of entering the rough-and-tumble of presidential primaries really superior to those who do? Is there a perfect presidential candidate just waiting in the wings, far too sensitive to ever declare himself and come right out on stage?

## Just an Intellectual Exercise

"I don't know why you are doing this," were virtually Gaylord Nelson's opening words as I entered his Senate office for the first of two lengthy interviews for this article. Although Nelson's reluctance is genuine, he has, almost as an intellectual exercise, developed strong feelings about what a presidential campaign ought to be. "I told Fritz, I've told Mo," Nelson said, "don't get caught in a situation where you have the presidential nomination and nothing to say." Nelson fears "another Quemoy-Matsu campaign" in 1976 and complains that no one who runs for President "talks about the big picture." Instead, he said, the campaign is much too fragmented, with candidates running around the country making 657 specific appeals to 657 specific groups. "I'm for more social security and raising the minimum wage, too," Nelson said, "but you can't run a presidential campaign on that. What people want from a candidate is to know where we are going, what the big picture is, and what sacrifices may be required."


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Nelson sketched out four basic themes he would raise in a presidential campaign—1) giantism; 2) the resources question; 3) detente and the military budget; 4) transportation. Nelson's omissions are revealing—nowhere does he mention the urban crisis, race, or poverty. Even during the 1960s these issues were always a bit peripheral to Nelson's basic concerns. Moreover, there is nothing about Nelson's views on the military budget or transportation to differentiate him from other liberal Democrats who want to cut defense spending and upgrade mass transit. The distinctiveness of Nelson's views about our national problems lies primarily in the areas of "giantism" and, to a lesser extent, the "resources question."

To an ideologue like Fred Harris, the phrase "giantism" immediately conjures up the ritual cry to break up the large corporations. Although concerned about the concentration of economic power, Nelson, unlike conventional liberals, is also extremely enthusiastic about governmental decentralization. "I've argued the states rights side of things for 15 years," he said. "I've argued the case against excessive federal control since I've been here. The best regional unit of government is state government. On that score Nixon was talking the right language, even though I don't think he understood what he was really getting at with the revenue sharing. Sure, the liberals respond by saying state government is corrupt, incompetent, and discriminatory. Sure, there are corrupt states, sure, there are incompetent states. But why screw up all 50 states because of the six corrupt ones? As for discrimination, with the Voting Rights Act, the voters themselves can deal with it. Screw Mississippi, it's their problem."

Nelson did, however, oppose Nixon's general revenue-sharing bill because it separated the ability to tax from the ability to spend. To remedy this lack of accountability, he talks with enthusiasm about a proposal "to cede to the states a certain percentage of federal tax money." This would give each state the option of spending it themselves or returning it to state residents in the form of rebates on their federal income taxes. This is basically a conservative notion since it would place a tremendous burden on the states to justify any new spending program which would cancel out the tax rebates. This idea is refreshing coming from a liberal Democrat, since it is inherently anti-bureaucratic. "Bureaucrats are afraid of their shadows," Nelson said in another context. "That's why most federal regulations are so complex. They draft insurance policy after insurance policy to prevent themselves from being caught in a mistake."

To Gaylord Nelson giantism also has a personal side. Repeatedly, Nelson, who grew up in rural Wisconsin, returns to his frustration that his children had to attend large suburban high schools: "I see where Birch Bayh wants federal funds to fight crime in the schools. Crime in the schools—what the hell does that say about our educational system? My kids went through Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School. There must have been a thousand kids in their class. They didn't know the student council, they didn't know the football or basketball players, they had no real sense of belonging. In my home town of Clear Lake there were just 28 of us in my graduating class. The real problem is giantism, but instead we'll just end up appropriating some money to fight crime in the schools."

Although strongly held, Nelson's views on the environment are not so vivid and idiosyncratic. He is convinced that the energy crisis has not disappeared and can only be solved if this nation develops an ethic of self-sacrifice. "If we had the refinery capacity, sure, we could pump all the oil we need," he said, "but then you are talking about running out of oil in 10, 20, or 40 years. It's like jumping off a high building; sooner or later, you're going to pass the first story. One of our major political problems is



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how to get short-lived individuals to face long-term problems which require immediate sacrifice.

"The greatness of the American system was built on waste," continued Nelson with a refrain which he has obviously repeated many times. "We depleted the resources of an entire continent. Our resources are like a bank account. You can't afford the depletion of your assets. Is your standard of living higher with three cars or with one car and a good mass transit system? I once had my staff figure out how many square miles we've paved over with highways in this country." Here he paused for emphasis. "It's 76,000 square miles. That's as big as the state of Wisconsin with another 20,000 square miles thrown in. That's 76,000 square miles of asphalt. That's 76,000 square miles taken away from our protein reserves."

Nelson's views on both decentralization and the environment have been shaped by his life experience. Similarly, his failure to assert himself in the Senate, let alone dabble in presidential politics, reflects the languor which has characterized his entire career. There is a flatness to the landscape of Gaylord Nelson's life, a lack of any evident conflicts or difficult decisions. For someone without either money or a famous name, Nelson's rise in politics has come with surprisingly little personal cost. Asked about turning points in his career, Nelson drew a blank, finally muttering something about no other Democrat wanting to run for the state senate in 1948.

## The Clear Lake Boy

Nelson's life may not have been filled with high drama, but the biographical facts are significant. He was born in 1916 in Clear Lake, a small village of about 700 people in northwestern Wisconsin. Most men in public life leave the small towns of their boyhood far behind, resurrecting


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them only for the most contrived of campaign appearances. It's different with Nelson. Clear Lake seems to genuinely provide him with roots and an identity: "It's a great place, I wish my children grew up there. Everybody knew everybody, everybody met each morning down at the post office to pick up the mail."

After the 1972 presidential campaign, armchair analysts stressed that George McGovern's real problem was that he is the son of a Methodist minister. Walter Mondale, too, is the son of a small-town midwestern minister. Gaylord Nelson comes out of an entirely different small-town tradition. His father was the kind of country doctor who placed his faith in the Progressive Party and the La-Follettes. Both this lack of religious emphasis and his family's Progressive politics had their impact. "Gaylord is still quite devoted to the LaFollette tradition," explained John Wyngaard, the dean of Wisconsin political reporters. "He likes nothing better than to be told that he's a fit successor in the Senate to old Bob and young Bob."

Wisconsin politics and Gaylord Nelson's career were shaped by the 1946 Republican primary in which Joseph McCarthy defeated "young" Bob LaFollette for the Senate nomination. (Gaylord Nelson, fresh out of the Navy, ran unsuccessfully for the state legislature that year as a Republican on the LaFollette ticket). It was LaFollette's defeat which convinced most young Progressives that their political future lay in reviving the state's moribund Democratic Party. Nelson, then practicing law in Madison, where he had attended law school at the University of Wisconsin, was in the forefront of this crossover. In 1948 at the urging of his law partner, John Lawton, and Miles McMillin, who later became publisher of the *Madison Capital-Times*, Nelson was induced to run for the state senate. "The only way we could get Gaylord to run was to promise him that he would lose," McMillin recalled. Contrary to expectations, Nelson won on Truman's coattails and began a ten-year career in the state senate.

Since, in those days, the state legislature was a part-time affair, Nelson continued to practice law. It was a small, two-man practice with labor unions as the major clients. Nelson never took it too seriously: "I worked just hard enough at the law to feed the family and pay off the mortgage." Nelson never took his political career that seriously either. Considered one of the intellectual leaders of the state senate, he had, and then lost, the post of minority leader. While most politicians who make it to the U.S. Senate are quick to use each minor elective post as a stepping stone, Gaylord Nelson in ten years made only one bid for higher office–an uphill 1954 congressional race which Nelson admits he was not "that anxious to win." In fact, it was the need to make ends meet which helped force Nelson into running for governor in 1958. "It was either that or going back to the full-time practice of law," he recalled.

When Nelson decided to run for governor, there were those who feared that he might be too indolent for the job. A 1958 *Milwaukee Journal* profile noted that "Nelson has never shown driving ambition, a fact which sometimes makes his friends despair; the Nelsons never have had much money. . . [or] social ambitions." Despite his reputation, Nelson was a surprisingly vigorous governor. True, he resented the 24-hour-a-day demands of the office, but he got things done. Relations with the state legislature were amicable, considering that it was dominated by Republicans during his four years as governor. For example, he won the passage of a $50-million land acquisition program to preserve wild and unspoiled portions of the state against the encroachments of developers. But the real issue which dominated this period was Nelson's decision to depart from liberal orthodoxy and support a sales


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tax to pay for his programs. It was a move which was fiscally necessary, since the state's income tax was already the highest in the country and it would have been painful to increase it. Still, Nelson was denounced by Pat Lucey, who was then state Democratic chairman, and most of the other liberal and union leaders in the state. When a special Democratic convention was called in opposition to the sales tax, Nelson told them, in effect, "If you don't like what I'm doing, you can get yourself another boy." Thanks largely to Republican support, the sales tax was enacted. Despite the furor, Nelson probably could have been elected to a third term as governor in 1962; instead, after some hesitation, he ran against and defeated Republican Senator Alexander Wiley.

## Searching for a Pattern

It is difficult to get a handle on Nelson's 12-year Senate career. There is no logical pattern to the issues with which he has been identified—automobile tires, generic drugs, Vietnam, the National Cancer Institute, and small business. Until he became chairman of the Senate Select Small Business Committee this year, there was no central focus to his committee work. Even this chairmanship carries limited responsibility, since the Committee has no legislative functions and can only hold "educational" hearings. This has helped Nelson to enjoy a Senate career in which he never really has had to face the consequences of his legislative actions. Nelson's speculative mind seems more suited to larger conceptual questions than to the detail work inherent in drafting complex legislation. Russell Long, chairman of the Finance Committee, on which Nelson also serves, implied this when he described Nelson as "well-versed in those areas where he takes an interest." A similar theme emerged from the 1972 Ralph Nader Congress Project, whose profile of Nelson was one of their better efforts; Nelson was described by aides as a "man who won't act on proposals for months, but a man who they can brief in five minutes on complex issues when his interest is aroused."

The one issue which seems to genuinely arouse Nelson's interest is conservation. Rep. David Obey, who represents the area of Wisconsin where Nelson grew up, explained, "You really have to see northern Wisconsin to understand what Nelson wants to preserve." To Nelson, the love of the outdoors is not abstract but personal. The anecdotes which friends tell about him seem to automatically revolve around hunting and fishing trips. Nelson's concern with conservation was apparent from the day he entered the Senate in 1963. His maiden speech was in support of a ban on non-biodegradable detergents. At a time when most liberal Democrats were preoccupied with the civil rights struggle, Nelson was calling preservation of our natural resources the "most urgent domestic crisis." That same year, Nelson, in one of the more foresighted moves of his career, tried to alert President Kennedy to the "awful dimension of the [environmental] catastrophe." Nelson wanted Kennedy to turn a routine conservation tour into a national crusade to sound the alarm about the impending cataclysm: "The destruction of the landscape, the pollution of our air and water [and] the overuse and abuse of our outdoor resources. . . ." Instead, Nelson complained during our interview, "Kennedy screwed it up, he just didn't understand the issue."

## The Last of the Early Doves

The other leading example of Nelson's foresight is, of course, Vietnam. Nelson is the last of the early critics of the Vietnam war left in the Senate. Perhaps his finest moment came during the 1964 debate on the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, when he argued vigorously that it might be construed by the President to imply that Congress "consents to a radical change in our mission. . . in South


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Vietnam." Yet in the end Nelson backed down. Although his amendment to limit the Resolution was rejected, he, unlike Morse and Gruening, voted for final passage. However, in 1965, he did join Morse and Gruening in voting against Vietnam appropriations.

Yet Nelson was never really on fire over the Vietnam war. Throughout 1965 and 1966—the key years of the Vietnam build-up—there were long periods during which he did not even mention the issue. When questioned by the press about his silence, Nelson would say somewhat petulantly, "I don't think there's any more to say. How many times do you say it?" These days Nelson admits that his record on the war was not flawless. "My son said to me," Nelson recalled, "you should be on the Senate floor filibustering against the war every day. It was a fair criticism. I clearly could have said more than I did."

When he wants to, however, Nelson can be a highly effective senator. He has few qualms about standing alone on an issue. For example, he refused to support the very popular Jackson Amendment, which made a domestic political issue out of the plight of Soviet Jews. Nelson reportedly said at the time, "I am not an intellectual whore." One symbolic gesture which bore legislative fruit was his lone vote against the War on Cancer in 1971. The legislation to establish the National Cancer Institute as an independent entity was as close as Congress ever came to a roll-call vote on death. But Nelson complained that an independent cancer agency would undermine the concept of the National Institutes of Health by giving special treatment to one disease. Despite opposition from the entire philanthropic health community, Nelson carried the fight to the House, where he helped get the bill modified in conference committee.

Health has also been the area of Nelson's most single-minded congressional effort—seven years of hearings on the drug industry, which aides claim is a record length. One reason for their duration is the difficulty that Nelson has had in turning the voluminous testimony into legislation. Part of the problem is that he has to get the cooperation of Ted Kennedy, who chairs the relevant legislative subcommittee. Relations between the two have never been close. Nelson was one of the few Northern senators who supported Russell Long over Kennedy for Senate Whip in 1969. As Bill Cherkasky, staff director of the Small Business Committee, explained, "Teddy Kennedy gives us a few hearings on things, but more often he tries to swipe our ideas on drug legislation."

## No Masochist, He

The erratic quality of Nelson's legislative performance has given him a reputation as a "lazy senator." Even Nelson's friends acknowledge the charge, although, of course, they de-emphasize its importance. Wisconsin state senator Carl Thompson, a friend from law school, said, "Gaylord looks at the kind of activity of someone like a Bill Proxmire as something resembling masochism." Much of Proxmire's vigorous activity is, of course, little more than frenzied self-promotion. In contrast to many politicians, Nelson's languor has spared him from many of the well-publicized effects that a congressional career has on family life and ordinary human relationships. Bill Cherkasky, who until recently was Nelson's administrative assistant, describes Nelson's schedule as pretty much nine-to-five, nine-to-six, and admits, "Generally he doesn't take things home with him to study all night." Nelson's habits sometimes frustrate excessively zealous staffers. Friends tell of Nelson slipping out the side door of his office late in the afternoon while his staff is lined up outside his office, vying to see him about their pet projects. Nelson's destination is often the Monocle, a


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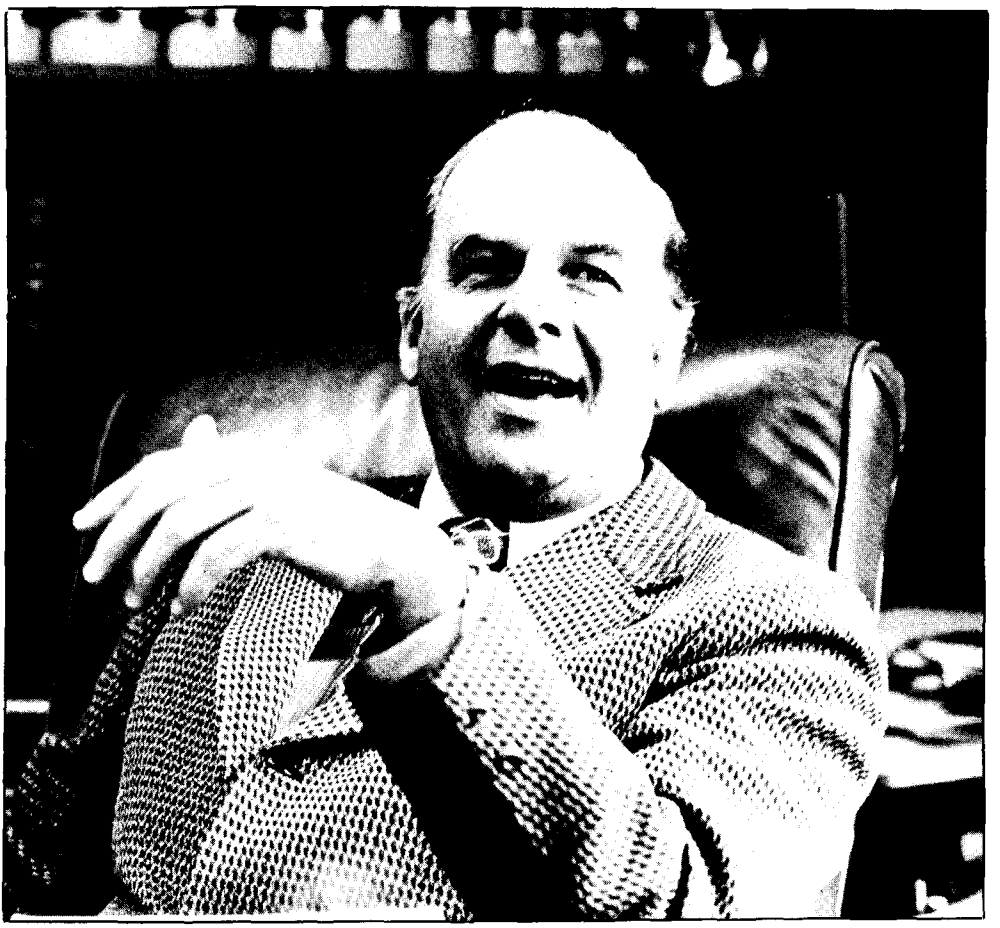

Diana H. Walker

Capitol Hill bar-restaurant, where he retires to have a drink with friends.

Laziness is a difficult characteristic to judge, since it requires an evaluation of the work which is being avoided. Nelson is clearly not driven by an intense desire to get things done, but that does not mean that he is a lightweight who sees the Senate as just a high-class sinecure. Nelson is a rarity in the Senate: an intelligent, gregarious man who is neither manipulative nor dogmatic. Walter Mondale called him "the best-liked man in the Senate." While that may be an over-statement, Nelson is unique in having a wide range of friendships which cut across ideological, regional and party lines. Russell Long praised Nelson as a "catalyst" bringing together such unlikely senators as James Eastland and Mondale. But few of Nelson's Senate friendships are designed to be functional. One observer said that Nelson's close friends tend to be mostly "good drinking companions." Ted Stevens, Republican Senator from Alaska, recalled that back in 1970 Nelson had taken the lead in organizing a small, informal group of senators who could not afford—or were not interested in—the glitter life in Washington. This group still gets together about once a month, and, as Stevens put it, "is held together by the compatibility of our wives and financial circumstances."

It was this network of Senate friendships which led to Nelson's involvement in the Eagleton affair. After declining the nomination himself, Nelson recommended Eagleton enthusiastically, telling McGovern "I know him. I've gone fishing with him and his kid and my kid." One hour later Eagleton's name was offered to


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the convention. In the midst of the ensuing crisis, McGovern requested that Nelson ask Eagleton to leave the ticket. Nelson recalled with relief that "the whole thing was unnecessary because when I saw Tom, he told me that he agreed to get off the ticket." Nelson also was asked to be present during the meeting where McGovern and Eagleton worked out the details of the abdication. "I didn't do much, though," Nelson said. "While George talked with the psychiatrists, I talked with Tom." Eagleton, the central figure in the whole psychodrama, had nothing but praise for Nelson's conduct in an awkward situation: "It was an emotionally charged atmosphere. . . and it was good to have a common-sense mutual friend there to help us put things together."

Gaylord Nelson fancies himself something of an incendiary: "On most congressional staffs, you have the staff trying to make a radical out of the incumbent. Here, in this office, things are the other way around." But it is clear that Nelson is too much a man of the Senate to be much of a radical. While understandable in human terms, there is something faintly disquieting about Nelson's friendships with Senate conservatives. Because of his affable nature, Nelson is sometimes too willing a compromiser, going along with Russell Long too readily on matters before the Finance Committee. Long calls Nelson "one of the most effective" Senate liberals, but what he means is that Nelson is not above a little mutual back-scratching. Long gave this specific example: In the late 1960s he helped Nelson by arranging a $22-million tax break for American Motors, headquartered in Kenosha, Wisconsin. This year Nelson remembered the favor and supported a similar tax break (ultimately defeated) for Chrysler.

## 'Is It Really Me?'

What sort of man are we left with? Gaylord Nelson remains a little difficult to fathom. A Senate colleague said, "He's a very private sort of guy." David Carley, who was in charge of natural resources when Nelson was governor, said, "I don't think that Gaylord Nelson wants everyone in the world to know him." He is a shy man who often shambles into a room awkwardly if he isn't expected or hasn't a well-defined role to perform. Friends suggest that he has never totally absorbed the implications of his painless rise in politics. "He still sees himself as a Clear Lake boy," said Joe Miller, a labor lobbyist who has known him since the 1950s. "He still has that country boy sense of awe, asking, 'Is it really me who's governor? Is it really me who's in the Senate?' He also has a country-boy inferiority complex and that kind of humility explains a hell of a lot of his charm." Another old friend could see Nelson happy as the kind of attorney who Jimmy Stewart portrayed in *Anatomy of a Murder*—the under-ambitious northern Michigan lawyer, whose major interests are hunting and fishing and maintaining just enough of a law practice to make ends meet.

One does not come away from a conversation with Gaylord Nelson awed by his brilliance. He has neither a breath-taking command of the specifics of government nor a way of speaking which leaves the listener transfixed. Many of Nelson's more strongly held views about government are drawn from personal experience rather than any larger conceptual framework. His views on decentralization, for example, are a direct outgrowth of his small-town origins and his experience as governor of a progressive state. In a revealing comment, David Carley noted that Nelson was really a conservationist, rather than an urban environmentalist. It shouldn't be surprising; Nelson's roots are rural, rather than urban. In a sense, Nelson sometimes appears radical almost because his life has been—for want of a better word—so sheltered that it is radically out of tune with the rest of the country.

Gaylord Nelson's last words to me



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were, "I still don't know why you're doing this, but. . . ." Given the current mood, it is easy to take a man's protestations that he does not want to be President as evidence of such a finely developed sensibility that this alone becomes a compelling reason why he should be given the job. For a while that was my feeling about Gaylord Nelson. There is an inherent strain in interviewing someone and trying to divine what sort of President he might make. It is hard to resist the temptation to see hidden insight in pedestrian statements such as, "The Senate is a hell of a place to learn anything." It becomes an indicator of Nelson's wide-ranging intellectual tastes that he has a copy of a book, *Animal Navigation*, resting on top of a recent issue of *The Economist*. In an earlier draft of this article, I actually found myself writing about how "Nelson's strength is conveyed by the way he leans forward and stares at you intently." It is almost that if a man as ordinary as Jerry Ford can be President, then one can find something latently presidential about the way Gaylord Nelson talks about planting a Japanese tomato ring in his garden.

On reflection, I realized that I had been inadvertently down-playing evidence, like the implications of Nelson's lack of ambition, which didn't fit my thesis. A friend of Nelson's described him as the last man to go to if you had a cousin who needed a job in a hurry. On the positive side, this illustrates that Nelson is not the sort of senator who delights in manipulating the levers of power, but it also suggests the difficulty he may have in accomplishing anything. In our infatuation with passivity in politics, we have forgotten that a passion for personal advancement is inextricably connected with the passion to get things done. To cite an inconvenient example, the current rapprochement with China was a direct result of Richard Nixon's obsession to leave tangible monuments of his Presidency.

Then there is Nelson's narrowness. It was somewhat disconcerting to hear a would-be presidential candidate say, as we sat on the porch of his suburban Washington home, "This is the only city I've ever lived in, except for a short time in Denver during the war." We have become an urban nation, but Gaylord Nelson's standards of reference are still Clear Lake and Madison. Although he has held office continuously for 26 years, Nelson's political experience is limited because Wisconsin is less than a microcosm of the union; its population is just three-percent black and its major urban center is Milwaukee. Close friends have noted how little Gaylord Nelson has changed since he entered the Wisconsin legislature in the late 1940s. There is much that is praiseworthy in the way he has not lost his identity in the transition from Madison to Washington. But it also suggests that Nelson has not been that deeply affected by much that happened along the way.

The insularity of the life experience of a good man like Gaylord Nelson should be a reminder of how difficult a country we are to understand, let alone govern. The original virtue of a long presidential campaign was that it could be a learning process for the candidate, as well as for the electorate. Running for President forces a candidate to come to grips with varieties of people and issues which would remain abstractions if life were encompassed by just Wisconsin and Washington. True, the modern presidential campaign, with its emphasis on total professionalism, has tended to become as homogenized as the Holiday Inns which house the candidate. But there is much which can be learned from traveling around the country before the primaries, talking with supporters in Florida, or trying to win the allegiance of black leaders in Los Angeles. A campaign like this isn't perfect, but it is the only crash course we have to teach potential Presidents what sort of country they are seeking to govern.


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Clearly, Gaylord Nelson should be taken at his word and not be viewed as a candidate for President. But this assessment does not explain the reasons for the uncritical acceptance of the Mondale Paradox or the current fascination with undiscovered presidential prospects. It is not enough to say that ambition has become discredited by Watergate. The prevailing attitudes toward the Mondale Paradox reflect something larger: a widespread longing to view presidential candidates as white knights in shining armor. Since none of the likely contenders in 1976 meets this ideal, liberals are now looking elsewhere for salvation. This enchantment with reluctant candidates meshes well with the current Harry Truman revival and its comforting message that greatness is to be found in unlikely places.

It was not so long ago that liberals regarded Gene McCarthy and George McGovern as exemplars of the heroic ideal. McCarthy's and McGovern's limitations should have been apparent from the beginning, and acknowledged, but most liberals chose to ignore them. When reality was finally perceived, this myopia led to bitter disillusionment and its crippling aftereffects.

This suspension of disbelief most strongly afflicts two different types of participants in the campaign drama—the campaign workers and the magazine profile writers. For campaign foot soldiers who sign on with a candidate months before the first primary, this ego-involvement in the fortunes of their boss is understandable. Profile writers suffer from a similar, if less often perceived, malady. For a campaign profile to work it has to take one of two tacks: either it has to be denunciatory or else the writer has to declare, "Eureka, I have found him. Here is the man who will lead us into the sunlight of a brighter tomorrow." Once having taken the latter tack, the author is as committed, if not more so, as any campaign worker.

There is another reason for this passionate approach to presidential politics. In an America where many highly educated people are not entirely fulfilled by their work, politics has increasingly become a mode of personal expression. There is a certain type of liberal who differentiates himself from the mass by the type of political candidate he supports. Take the 1968 primary contests between McCarthy and Bobby Kennedy. In retrospect, the policy differences which separated them seem laughably narrow. Yet the passions of the McCarthy backers, in particular, are a reminder that those primaries symbolized much more than simply slightly differing approaches to government.

From here it is but a short step to the kind of political purism which dogmatically rejects candidates because they don't meet exalted standards of perfection. Frank Church, for example, is automatically dismissed because he opposed gun control. Morris Udall becomes suspect because at times his congressional voting record reflects more the realities of Arizona politics than the canons of liberal orthodoxy. Jimmy Carter is not even considered because he was, after all, governor of Georgia.

Further examination may reveal that none of the above candidates is worthy of support for President. There is, of course, a major distinction between not rejecting candidates for a single blot on their records and ignoring the pattern of entire careers, as in the cases of Henry Jackson and Lloyd Bentsen. What must be recognized is that politics is a comparative, as well as a competitive, sport. More so than many professions, politics is not an occupation for saints. But as long as we begin each campaign with the hope of canonizing a candidate we are doomed to become cynically disillusioned when the glow finally wears off. Sooner or later, we must lower our sights to realistic levels, rather than continue this self-defeating quest for the Holy Grail in the form of the perfect, unblemished presidential candidate. ■



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# Memo of the Month

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OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Office of The Assistant
To The Director

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May 30, 1975

STATEMENT

Recently the news media have mentioned the names of Mr. Virginio Gonzales and Mr. Frank Sturgis.

Neither Mr. Gonzales nor Mr. Frank Sturgis have ever been connected with the Central Intelligence Agency in any way.

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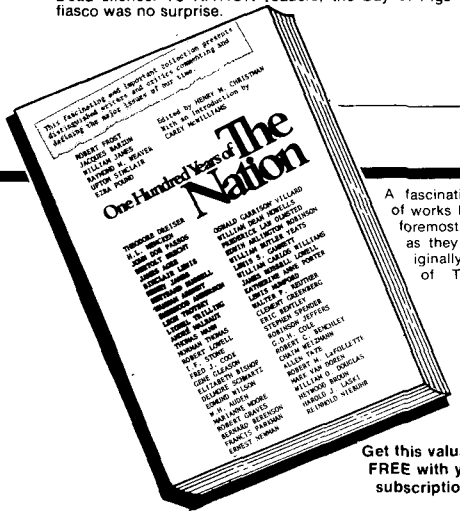


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WHY JOHNNY CAN'T EAT:

# The Saga of the Farm Bill

by Dan Balz

There are few ideal times for Congress to legislate, but 1975 should have been a perfect time for a new farm program. The Rome World Food Conference had caught the world's attention last November. The fear of mass starvation, the need to rebuild international grain reserves, the necessity of American farmers producing all out, and the political overtones of U. S. food aid all made it clear that 1975 was a year for Congress to review the government's food policy and if necessary—and there were few who believed it wasn't necessary—bring that policy up to date.

But the path was full of pitfalls. There were no longer any easy ways to satisfy the competing desires of the American farmer, the American consumer, and the hungry people of Bangladesh and the African Sahel. The Senate Republicans, in a policy statement last December, had shown the folly of trying to satisfy everyone. They called for "maximum production to meet domestic needs and requirements in cases of famine or humanitarian requirements abroad," which suggested crop surpluses and lower prices on the farm. At the same time, they wanted policies which "provided adequate incentives for the farmer"—i.e., higher prices—and urged further that food policy "recognize the vital importance of agricultural exports" to sustain farm income and buoy up the balance of payments. All that was missing was a recommendation that the farmers sell high and the consumers buy low. There was no suggestion that some of the goals might be contradictory, or that unpleasant steps, such as reduced domestic consumption, or increased public interference with the food supply, might have to be taken.

One of the unpleasant realities that

*Dan Balz is a reporter for the* National Journal.



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faced Congress as it began deliberation this year was that everyone involved in the issue was crying for greater protection. The farmers needed to be sure that if they produced more to feed the world's hungry, the bottom would not drop out of the market and suddenly reduce their income. The consumers needed protection against similarly sudden price rises in bad crop years. For farmers, protection would mean accepting some system of grain reserves—even though this meant that the government might release some of the reserves and hold down the price in years when farmers would otherwise make a killing. For the consumers, it would mean tolerating somewhat higher food prices, and realizing that the era of cheap food was behind them. For government officials worried about oil imports, it would mean foregoing some of those attractive earnings on agricultural exports, and having the courage to increase commitments for humanitarian food aid. Doing all these things, and more, was a tall order, but not beyond reason for a Congress which announced proudly that it was ready to take its legislative responsibilities seriously.

Congress was not even scheduled to debate a farm bill this year; that was supposed to come in 1977. So there should have been no pressure to slap together a quick solution before the old program expired. There should have been enough time for Congress to think and debate and draft a program which dealt with the realities of U.S. and world agriculture in the 1970s. There was debate, but very little thought, and in understanding why it is important to remember that farm policy still excites people only in the abstract; the concrete details still mystify even some experts. Most people presume there is some connection between farm programs and the price and availability of food, but no one really knows what it is, and few have cared enough to pay any serious attention. It has been easier to blame things on the Russians and the weather, which are expected to be mysterious. Farm bills are simply dull. In an age of consumerism, of rich farmers and poor people, of urban politicians and media showmanship, this means that the old-fashioned con job still thrives.

That is what happened to the reconstituted 94th Congress in the first five months of 1975. Presented with an opportunity to construct a rational food policy, Congress muffed it because it was too anxious to offer farmers a payoff and unwilling to call a halt to a series of snow jobs advanced by everyone who had a stake in the bill. In the end Congress came up empty-handed, with no bill, no useful ideas upon which to build, and its leadership demoralized. It could hardly have done worse.

There were institutional reasons for optimism when the session opened in January. Representative Thomas Foley of Washington, a 46-year-old Democrat in good standing, had by the good graces of the freshmen become chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, the first non-Southerner to hold that seat in more than 20 years, and perhaps the first man ever with interests and ties that


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went far beyond the narrow scope of farm legislation. Foley had not sought the job, nor had he picked a fight with the existing chairman, W. R. (Bob) Poage of Texas, as had other ambitious Democrats on other committees. When the freshmen challenged Poage, Foley came to his defense. But as a chairman of the Democratic Study Group, the instrument of reform in the House, Foley had helped set the tone which was to bring down Poage and the others.

To many, Foley represented all that a committee chairman should be: moderately young, bright, broad-minded, progressive, and sensitive to the new currents flowing through the House. Foley's district in Washington, the fifth, spans the city of Spokane and its suburbs, then spreads west, north, and south through some of the nation's most productive wheat-growing acreage. There was no member of the House better suited to wed the competing needs of farmer and consumer. Foley had worked during his ten years in the House to tie rural interests to those of organized labor and the urban Democrats. He had protected the food stamp program from the attacks by Southern Democrats on the Agriculture Committee, and had spent countless hours impressing upon his rural friends how important it was to get urban votes on farm bills.

Something else made people think the committee was ready for a revival. As the year began, 21 new faces populated the committee, 15 of them newly elected to Congress. The freshmen regarded the committee not as Ultima Thule, as their predecessors had (in 1973 Agriculture was the least popular), but as a kind of promised land. In December 1974 Peter Peyser, a New York Republican, wrote an open letter to the incoming freshmen which was printed on the op-ed page of *The New York Times*. He said that if new members wanted to make a difference, if they wanted to grapple with international and domestic problems, if they wanted to help their constituents, they should join the Agriculture Committee. Peyser, who represents Westchester County, where the most lucrative cash crop is money itself, had recently signed on with the committee and was preparing to make his bid as a "consumer advocate" on the panel. Peyser's message got through, but it was a siren's song to a lot of gullible members. The letter played on the notion that there were simple answers to the problems of food, that the consumers had been short-changed primarily because there were no consumer advocates on the panel, and that there were hungry people in India because no one on the committee had cared about that problem. Peyser's message came through; in 1975 no House committee was more requested than Agriculture. But what everyone forgot was their susceptibility to the hustle, and it began almost immediately.

## Too Much of a Good Thing

The first hustle came from the farmers. Because weather has worried people since the banishment from Eden, the problems which worried farmers were not unique, but they had a special twist. What the farmers feared most was what the rest of the world wanted desperately—good weather in the Midwest, bountiful harvests, and some easing of the tight world grain supplies. For the farmers, who have enjoyed some spectacular years lately, good weather meant larger crops, which in turn meant lower prices. But a Library of Congress study estimated in January that in an extremely good year—near-perfect weather and record crops—farm income could plummet in 1976 to a third of what it had been in 1973. It was something which few people—least of all most members of Congress—had been worrying about. When congressmen thought about the food problem, they thought about dissatisfied consumers who had not gotten used to the new plateau of food prices. This, plus the noble desire


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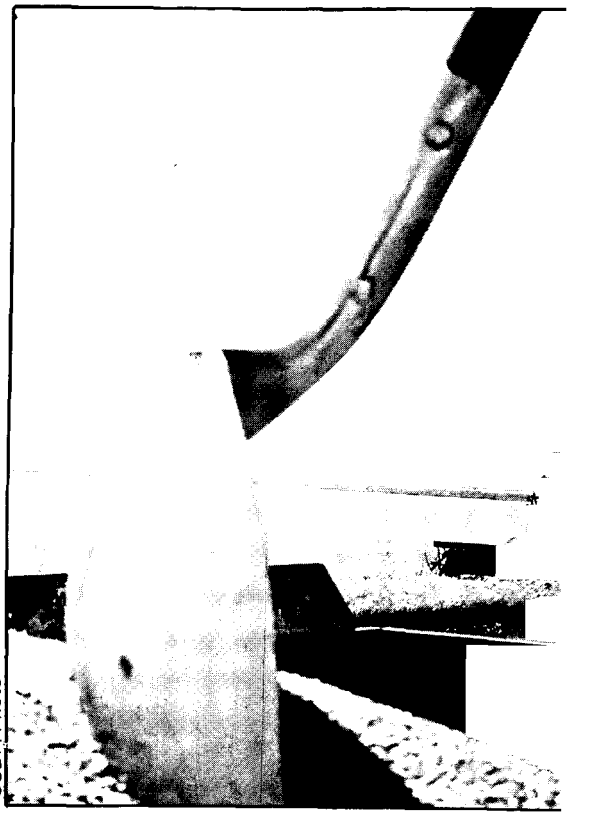
to feed the hungry world, made many people believe that the principal goal in farm policy was to assure all-out overproduction. But the farmers had a legitimate case: unless they had some guarantee against losing their shirts, they would refuse to plant the extra acres. Congress would, at some point, have to balance the competing interests, but because the farmers started agitating first and loudest, warning of massive bankruptcies or significantly reduced production, their hyperbole fell on unusually receptive ears. A few weeks after the 94th Congress started to work, the farmers' hustle had won enough members to guarantee that Congress would focus on the problem of farm income and not on any broader questions of food policy.

Months later there is still confusion about exactly how the farm bill, HR 4296, began—and why. One theory, suggested by those intimately involved, is that it started as old Bob Poage's revenge, as a strike to regain lost prestige. Since losing his chairmanship, Poage has become head of the Livestock and Grain Subcommittee, the most important of them all. Whether Poage, who had heard threats about the weather before, believed the farmers were in a genuine emergency is not important, for there were a lot of other members of the committee who did—enough members in fact, that if Poage decided a farmers' emergency bill was the right vehicle for reasserting his own importance, the subcommittee would go along.

Peter Peyser had made one miscalculation when he sounded the trumpet in December. He forgot that most of the freshmen attracted to the Agriculture Committee were Democrats, a lot of them from rural, usually Republican districts. Their main concern was surviving the 1976 election, when they wouldn't be able to run against Watergate, and they knew that nothing would please their constituents more than high price supports. Within a matter of days, Poage's subcommittee had produced a



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bill that made traditional farm champions look like pikers. The bill raised target prices for wheat from $2.05 a bushel to $3.10; for corn, from $1.38 a bushel to $2.25; and for cotton, from 38 cents a pound to 48 cents. By contrast, the Agriculture Department was willing to support levels of $2.30 to $2.50 for wheat and something below $2 for corn. The new bill exceeded even the generosity of Hubert Humphrey, who, in a bill he offered last fall, had recommended $3 for wheat and $2 for corn. The bill also increased loan levels (which are essentially price floors) and raised the support price for milk from 80 per cent of parity to 85 per cent.

Even Poage shook his head over the generosity of the bill. And Foley, the man who had created great expectations, knew he was on the spot. The farmers' hustle and the blind enthusiasm of the freshmen, to whom Foley was indebted for his chairmanship, had spun him against the wall. The bill was first and most



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obviously too generous. No one, not even Earl Butz, questioned the fact that farmers faced some problems this year, and that the threat of lower market prices could reduce their income. But after three extraordinarily good years, they seemed in less urgent need of protection than in the past, while the Poage bill gave them far more than ever before.

Second, the bill was too narrow in scope. It pretended to deal with the world food problem through the single approach of raising farm income. It had assumed that the answer to the problems of hungry people, of frustrated consumers, and of worried farmers lay in the simple, reflex action of boosting prices, an approach which did nothing to guarantee the creation of new domestic reserve stocks, nor to guarantee that American food aid would go to those who truly needed it.

Once the committee had acted, the Agriculture Department began its hustle. The Department overplayed its hand, but not so badly that its attempted snow job was a failure. Since first impressions and early headlines count for so much, the later repudiation of Agriculture's estimates failed to erase their initial impact.

Under Earl Butz, the Agriculture Department had turned into a group of tough, if not always politically wise, poker players. Butz and his Department didn't want a bill in early 1975, although they recognized that farmers might need some small increases in target prices and loan levels if they were to stay in business. Butz had never liked the target price concept very well, preferring to find "free market" ways to keep farm income up. He had accepted the concept—but only after forcing Congress to back down on what he considered one of the most repugnant features of the farm bill. That provision called for an annual increase in target prices to keep farmers abreast of inflation, and Butz succeeded in delaying it until 1976. The bill that came out of the committee in March 1975 was an even greater affront to Butz. Not only did it propose to raise the targets a year ahead of schedule, but it also built into them a much higher base for future escalation. Butz had built his career as Secretary by getting farm prices up, but in 1975 he didn't want to start another round—not just yet at least. There would be larger political payoffs if that could come in another year.

In his years as Secretary, Butz had learned to read the House well. In 1975 he knew the swing votes on the farm bill belonged to the consumers, and those were the votes he set out to win. The Department began emitting the customary reams of statistics estimating the cost of the bill, but these statistics were different from any before. Instead of calculating the cost to the federal treasury, Butz went for the consumer's jugular. His statisticians estimated how much the bill would add to shoppers' burdens each week at the supermarket.


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Here came the hustle. From the farmers' point of view, and from the perspective of people worried about world food shortages, the core of the farm bill was the price increases for wheat and corn. Some of the other proposals, notably the increases for cotton and milk, were appealing to certain narrow political blocs, but would not do much either to protect endangered farmers or to increase world supplies. But the Department of Agriculture knew the bill was most vulnerable on cotton and milk, and that was where it zeroed in. A few days after the Agriculture Committee approved the bill, the Department said if it were passed, within a year the price of milk would rise by eight cents a gallon, the price of cheese by ten cents a pound, and the price of butter by a whopping 20 cents a pound. That scared even Albert Rees, director of the Council on Wage and Price Stability and no expert on agriculture. He called a press conference to say the bill should be defeated and that it was in the worst interest of the consumer.

Almost everyone is forced to rely on the Department for basic agricultural statistics: the legislators, the committee staffs, the lobbyists, the press, and the public. Only the Department has the resources to produce the data everyone wants, and for that reason the Department's ploy was almost totally successful. But something smelled wrong about those numbers, and a few of the representatives went down to the Department's headquarters to find out more. Berkley Bedell, a Democrat from the northwest corner of Iowa, told the full House later what he had found:

"The U.S. Department of Agriculture has deliberately misled the people into thinking that these projected increases in the cost of milk and butter would occur at once and would be solely the result of this bill," he said. "Actually, over half of the increases are the result of inflation which occurs during the period up to March 30, 1976. The government's projection of a 20-cent-per-pound increase on butter, which has generated so much adverse comment on this bill, should have been less than five cents per pound."

But the damage had been done; the headlines could not be rewritten. Before Bedell and his friends were able to expose the Department, other minds were made up, and on the basis of some of those decisions, we come to hustle number three.

**Peter Peyser Picked a Peck. . .**

Consumers discovered the farm sometime in early 1973, shortly after the Soviet Union bought all our extra grain and the price of beef started to rise. That was shortly after consumers had discovered themselves as a political force. Nationally there are three groups of importance: the National Consumers League, the National Consumer Congress, and the Consumer Federation of America.

The most important thing to know about the consumer movement is that no one knows what it is or what it does. That complicates things for people interested in counting votes. Sometimes the leaders of the movement don't get along.

Sometimes no one knows who the leaders are. In the House, several new members of the Agriculture Committee have become self-appointed saviors of the consumers. One is Peter Peyser, a man not always trusted by members of the consumer movement. (On one occasion he assembled representatives of one consumer organization in a room with representatives of the cotton shippers and the bakers lobby. His purpose was to reach a "consumer position" on some pending legislation.) Peyser is so taken with his new role that he's started wearing cowboy boots on the floor of the House and is proud as punch to be invited to serve as speaker at conventions of cattlemen out West. Another "consumer voice" is Margaret Heckler of Massachusetts, who gave up a seat on the Banking


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Committee to join Agriculture. She opposed the farm bill. Peyser opposed it. The National Consumer Congress opposed it. The Consumers League deferred. Only the Consumer Federation was willing to endorse it—and not, as we will see, just because the Federation thought the bill helped consumers.

## The Education of Carol Foreman

The consumer movement's Achilles heel is its lack of political sophistication. Most of the people in the top positions are still so new to national politics that they are intimidated quickly and flattered easily. Still primarily middle class and suburban in their perspective, they live by the barometer of prices. If prices go up, that's bad. If prices go down, that's good. For many of them, the world of food politics is no more complicated than that. The one person in the movement who sees the world differently is Carol Tucker Foreman, executive director of the Consumer Federation.

There's still a touch of Arkansas twang in her voice, still some feel for the country in her soul, but Carol Tucker Foreman is now quite a tough-minded woman. She became executive director about 18 months ago, at a time when it was beset by internal problems, and has made it one consumer group with political sophistication and a modicum of power. Carol Foreman's sophistication shows up in her performance on food policy. When she took over the Federation, she recognized immediately that for consumers, the food issue was shifting from questions of health and safety (remember food additives?) to those of economics. She began asking questions of people like Jim Hightower and Susan DeMarco of the Agribusiness Accountability Project. They persuaded her that consumers were imperiled not by rapacious farmers, especially the smaller farmer, but by the larger food companies and grain traders. In her 18

Cashen/Stout

Carol Foreman

months she has learned well her economics and politics.

It is through Carol Tucker Foreman that the farm-labor-consumer coalition has become part of the political lexicon on farm legislation. In the last few months much has been made of this coalition, of its importance and its potential power. A lot of this is exaggerated, but in Washington rumors of power are often as important as power itself; and on the emergency farm bill, Foreman played the pivotal role in advancing the cause of the farm-labor-consumer position.

The links between parts of the farm movement and organized labor are recent ones, mostly developed over the past ten years. For many years, neither side needed the other. Farm legislation was in the hands of the cotton interests and they had enough support from other representatives, often Republicans from the Midwest, to get the kind of farm programs they wanted. But as reapportionment and migration reduced the strength of the farm bloc in Congress, representatives of the farm


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community found that they could not pass a bill on their own. Labor, in the meantime, was stepping up pressure for social legislation and discovering that, on certain kinds of issues, it needed some support from the rural legislators.

When the theoreticians of the labor movement and the farm bloc analyzed their common problems, someone realized that each really wanted the same thing from legislation: some kind of price guarantee. Weldon V. Barton, now a member of the House Agriculture Committee staff, but until April a lobbyist for the National Farmers Union, explains it this way: "Farmers have a stake in maintaining legislation to help manage supply and keep prices up. Labor has the same stake in minimum wage legislation and legislation to let them bargain." This may sound terribly simple, but it was absolutely essential in forging the connection between the two groups. It also demonstrates the extent to which all groups—business, labor, farmers—are trying to flee the workings of a free market. The corporate bailouts for Lockheed and the pleas for help from Pan Am are not strictly analogous to the farm bill and minimum-wage legislation, but in all of them there is a recognition that being thrown to the mercy of the market has become a dangerous business.

In the Senate the coalition was easily formed. Many of the senators most interested in farm legislation—Hubert Humphrey, George McGovern and Walter Mondale come to mind—were also out front pushing social legislation favored by labor. In the House, things were tougher, so it was left to people like Foley and Bob Bergland of Minnesota to build the links slowly. Poage didn't like to deal face-to-face with the farm-labor coalition, but he recognized its existence and gradually came to depend on those votes to get his bills through.

In 1973 it became apparent to people like Bergland, Barton, and Foley that the coalition needed one more member, this time the consumers. During the fight over the 1973 farm bill (named, significantly enough, the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act) an attempt was made to include consumer groups, but it was too late; the consumer groups were consulted only after the bill had been shaped. Labor, in contrast, had assumed such a strong role in farm legislation that its lobbyists often dictated the terms of the bills.

USDA Photo

But this year the consumer vote was pivotal. Butz knew it; Barton knew it; everyone knew it, which is why so many people were scrambling over each other to be known as the "voice of the consumer" in Congress. So when the House committee reported out the emergency farm bill on March 4, the reaction everyone was waiting to hear was that of the consumers and, to a smaller degree, of labor. It mattered little that the National Farmers Organization endorsed the bill enthusiastically, that the American Farm Bureau Federa-

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tion followed the Department of Agriculture line and opposed it, or that the National Farmers Union, the cagiest of the farm groups, also opposed it, saying it was not generous enough, although they privately hoped desperately for passage. The consumers were still to be heard from, and this is where Carol Tucker Foreman became important, and where, from the wings, entered hustle number three.

Like other consumer representatives, Foreman was disturbed by the Agriculture Department's cost estimates. She knew better than to reject the bill simply for that reason, but she was especially concerned about cotton and milk. "To urban people, cotton is clearly a pariah," Foley once said. "When they hear 'cotton' they still see the man in his white suit and Panama hat standing on the courthouse steps watching some poor black boy being lynched." Foreman decided the Consumer Federation could not endorse the cotton sections. The decision about dairy prices was more difficult, and she agonized for a time over the plight of the little dairymen, who have been losing money in many parts of the country. But like cotton, the dairy industry has been tarnished by its political contributions and the aggressive economic power of the big co-ops. She and others at the Federation decided, somewhat reluctantly, that the increase in the milk support price had to go, too. On March 4, the Federation announced it would support the bill if those two sections were changed.

That cleared the way for a decision by organized labor, and it came swiftly. The unions, said George Meany, would support the bill if the cotton and dairy sections were pruned back, a position identical to that of the Consumer Federation. The reason had to do with the man in the labor movement who follows farm legislation most closely, Arnold Mayer, a lobbyist for the Amalgamated Butchers and Meatcutters of America. A small, bearded, cheerful man, he has been around Washington for nearly 20 years lobbying for union causes, and in the past several years he has helped strengthen the farm-labor link. But the emergency farm bill had upset him. It had come too early in the session, for one thing; in the past, labor had been able to do some trading on its own bills before the farm bill came up. Like Foreman, he was bothered by the bill's generosity and had been scratching his head, looking for an easy way out. The Consumer Federation endorsement, with its reservations about cotton and milk, offered a solution, and Mayer readily admitted that it was the Federation's announcement that influenced him to recommend a similar position.

Stating it this way is a little too simple, for the Consumer Federation recommendation did not exactly come as a surprise to Mayer. He is a long-time friend of Carol Foreman, an even better friend of her husband (who is employed by the retail clerks


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union), and, moreover, sits on the executive committee of the Consumer Federation. On that committee, Mayer actually participated in developing the Federation's position.

"When George Meany supports a farm bill," Earl Butz said, "I want to see the fine print. I want to see what deals have been made." Butz knew the hustle was on. Labor gets farm votes on minimum wage bills, protection on food stamps for strikers, and backing on a few other key issues; the farm groups get support on farm bills, once labor and consumer groups explain what they're willing to accept; the Consumer Federation may get critical votes to override a veto of the bill creating a "consumer-protection agency." This was the extent of the "alliance," but when it spoke to Congress it tried to sound as if 60 million laborers, 10 million farmers, and 200 million consumers were speaking with one voice.

The farm bill went to the House floor on March 18 amid threats from Earl Butz that President Ford would veto it, and confusion over whether it helped or hurt the consumer. By March 20 it had passed exactly as labor and the Consumer Federation had wanted. The vote was 259 to 162. A day later the cotten hustle began.

## King Cotton Dethroned

King Cotton, the old ruler of the farm bloc, has been on the defensive lately. In the old days, cotton farmers got the biggest payments from the farm programs, usually got the sweetest deals on loans and could count almost always on some "technical" detail in the farm bill to reward them handsomely for their efforts. But as labor became more important on farm legislation, cotton's dominance slowly diminished, even though the Southerners who defended cotton held key positions in Congress: Herman Talmadge of Georgia, chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee; James Eastland of Mississippi, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee and number two on Agriculture; John Stennis of Mississippi, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee; George Mahon of Texas, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee; Jamie Whitten of Mississippi (often called the permanent Secretary of Agriculture), chairman until 1975 of the Appropriations subcommittee that handles the Department of Agriculture budget; Poage of Texas, the deposed House Agriculture Committee chairman.

With the addition of consumers to the farm-labor coalition, cotton became further isolated. They still carried the votes, but people with a bent toward consumerism found in cotton a convenient whipping boy. The addition of the consumers also helped spread the germ of another idea which has forced cotton onto the defensive. It says simply that cotton is a non-food commodity, and as such is not important to solving the world food problem. Therefore, the theory goes, cotton should not be rewarded through legislation.

So in 1975, King Cotton was on the run, shunted aside by the interests it used to dominate. That is where Dave Bowen and his cotton hustle step in. Bowen is a Democrat from Mississippi, now in his second term, who already chairs the cotton subcommittee on the House Agriculture Committee. He is not a symbol of segregation; the Oxford in his background is Oxford University in England, where he went after graduation from Harvard. He didn't fight the civil rights movement; he worked for the Office of Economic Opportunity. He helped sponsor legislation blocking the rise in the price of food stamps. He supports minimum wage laws, and he is running hard to bring cotton back into the middle of the farm bloc.

The day after the farm bill passed the House, a press release floated out of Bowen's office hailing the rebirth of the old coalition between Southern and Northern Democrats as saviors of


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the economy. Bowen used his credentials as a professor of political science to put the stamp of credibility on that press release, but it had a purpose other than historical analysis. Bowen knew that cotton was in trouble and that the only way it could survive was to make people believe that the old coalition still existed—that the South belonged, and that cotton was still mighty.

Bowen's own defense of cotton is suitably up-to-date and progressive. Bowen evokes no fluffy images of cotton, nor does he rhapsodize on cotton's historical role in the American economy and the Southern culture. He knows that what the world worries about now is food, and he has a reason for the consumers to believe in and help the cotton farmers. "Cotton," he said one day, "produces more protein in one acre than wheat produces in six. And cotton provides the world with six per cent of the world's protein." Cotton is no longer cotton, in this Bowen hustle, but rather cottonseed meal, a high-protein substance now fed to animals but being adapted for human use.

Bowen's gambit may become more important in the next few years as he works to restore some of cotton's image and power in the farm bloc. This year it may have helped keep cotton in the bill, a decision which ultimately contributed to the measure's death.

## The Road to Oblivion

Each hustle had begotten another; the farmers to the subcommittee members to the Department of Agriculture to the farm-labor-consumer coalition to cotton. As the bill moved across the Senate, the members of the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry had two choices. They could take the bill seriously and try to cure its defects, or they could assume (quite accurately) that Butz's veto threats were serious, accept the fact (quite reasonably) that they had been dealt a bad hand, roll over, play dead, and later blame it all on the House.

The committee decided to roll over and play dead, its own special kind of hustle, rather than facing the tough problem of solving world food problems through creation of American grain reserves. Grain reserves worry Herman Talmadge, and Talmadge was chairman of the committee. The members got to work immediately after the House passed the bill, trying to beat the Easter recess deadline. Within a single day they reported out a bill which removed the amendments approved on the House floor.

The bill made it through the Senate painlessly enough, while the air of unreality thickened. The Senate seemed to consider both the House and Talmadge's committee cheapskates and approved an amendment sponsored by Lee Metcalf of Montana (for Mike Mansfield, the majority leader) to raise the wheat target from an incredible $3.10 a bushel to an astronomical $3.41. In short order the bill was on its way to conference, and Earl Butz was yelling veto.

By now the House committee leaders were clearly worried. The most they could hope for was that the conference committee would reject the costly Senate version and go back to the House provision; in the end, that is what the conference did. The Senate approved the conference report by voice vote on April 17. On April 22 the report was taken up by the House. The vote in favor was 248 to 166. Instead of being 22 votes short of a two-thirds majority, the House was now 28 short.

So began the final hustle, the Jerry Ford hustle. Everyone expected a veto by then. Butz had used the veto threat as a bargaining tool in 1973, and managed to get that year's bill altered to his taste. This year he could not get his way from Congress, and the veto would be more than a threat. But many hoped that, for political reasons, Ford and Butz would throw a bone toward the farmers even while rejecting the bill. Butz hinted that a bone might be on the way, saying that


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Ford was prepared, if necessary, to increase loan rates if farm prices plunged. Even though his free-market rhetoric has gotten the best of him, Butz is one of the last people in the government willing to let farm income fall drastically. But he was playing with a President who was beginning to assert himself as an executive, and a President furthermore who could count. Ford decided eventually that it's far better to win without having to give up anything.

On May 1 Ford vetoed the bill, and when Butz met with reporters in the White House press room, he came empty-handed; there would be no announcement of higher loan rates. In his veto message Ford contended that the bill would add $1.8 billion to the federal deficit, an estimate which supporters of the bill said was another Department of Agriculture phony. But Ford also said the bill would cost not only taxpayers, but farmers and consumers as well, and as vulnerable as those Department estimates may have been, they continued to dance in the minds of those who would have to vote on an override. Ford was zeroing in on those critical swing votes.

The action shifted back to the House for the last time. If the House could not override the veto, there was no reason for the Senate to waste its time. Ford and Butz kept up their loan rate hustle. On the floor, John Anderson of Illinois said Ford was still prepared to keep his eye on farm income and loan rates and would not let farms fail. Butz said the Department would keep its eye on milk supports. The lobbyists lined up: in favor of the override were the National Farmers Organization, National Farmers Union, AFL-CIO, National Milk Producers Federation, and the Consumer Federation; against were the Farm Bureau, the National Consumer Congress, and Common Cause. The consumer vote was disorganized and disoriented and when the vote came, it was 40 votes short of paradise, 245 to 182.

## The Earl Crisis

The defeat did more than kill a bad bill. It demoralized people and probably ended for this year the hope that Congress can come up with a substantive farm program. The fighting has left a bitter taste in many mouths; there is anger at the Department for its cost estimates. But more important, there is fear on the House committee. Foley and others are gun-shy, wondering now what kind of bill it will take to win the President's signature, worried about what step to take next. They will look for other issues, smaller bills, to regain their lost prestige, to restore their confidence. Until then, there will be no big farm bill.

The real failure was one of leadership. In a year which demanded changes in traditional approaches to farm policy, Congress instinctively looked backward for an answer, for an easy solution. The world's food problems concern complex issues—grain shortages, inadequate and unjust distribution, and production roadblocks abroad—but Congress dealt with things as simply as it could. No one could shake the habit of lumping into one farm bill the problems of grains, dairy, and cotton. In the end it was that reflex action which sealed the bill's fate, for it exposed to anyone willing to take a hard look that this was not a serious piece of legislation. There was no reason for Butz and Ford to give in on a bill which even farm-state senators knew was short-sighted.

Ford and Butz came out winners for another reason. Not only did they block a bill they disliked; they gave up nothing in return. So if farm income starts falling next year, if corn and wheat prices start to drop after a good harvest this year and the prospect of another one in 1976, don't be surprised if you see Earl Butz out there jacking up the loan rates and shoveling money into rural America. He helped elect one President that way in 1972. It can happen again. ■



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# John Gardner and the Albany Nymphettes

by Taylor Branch

In the current era of cynicism and despair about our public morals, it is a rare event indeed when any politician can wrap himself in the cloak of civilized decency without being laughed out of the house. Some people think elected officials are the victims of large historical forces that have reduced all virtue to pretense. Others believe that the spotlight of reform has merely exposed the timeless rascality of politicians. In any case, so many statesmen have been caught playing with their navels that the path of righteousness has been obscured. In New York State the path is widely assumed not to exist. For more than a century New Yorkers have repeated the wry dictum that "neither one's life nor one's property is safe while the New York State Legislature is in session." New York leads the nation in criminal indictments against politicians, and grimy scandals have become a pastime, often no more than a hindrance to a political career. The state capital, mercifully tucked away in upstate Albany, has such a reputation for thievishness that innocent citizens feel a need to explain themselves if they visit the scene.

Last February, a civic revolution appeared to take place in Albany when the State Assembly passed a resolution to "register disapproval of" a lobbyist whose unseemly activities had been recently detailed in the press. The lobbyist, Albert N. Podell, reportedly confessed his tactics in a speech that would have been surprising even if Podell were not the Albany representative of Common Cause, the citizens' lobby for clean politics. Despite a reporter's presence in the audience, Podell had told how he got a female agent to build up a romantic liaison with a staff member in the office of the Assembly Speaker, giving Podell an intelligence "pipeline" into the Speaker's affairs. Podell also said

*Taylor Branch is the Washington editor of* Harper's *and a contributing editor to* The Washington Monthly.



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that he had used two 15-year-old girls to lobby for liberalized laws governing the sale of contraceptives. He described one of the girls as virginal and the other as tough. The scheme was brilliant—combining the feminine appeal of young girls with the "tough guy-nice guy" persuasive technique that has been popular since the earliest days of espionage and interrogation—but it was not becoming to the ideals of New York State, much less to those of Common Cause. Podell revealed other exploits, but these two were enough to cause shock waves. He became the first person in more than 30 years to be censured by the New York Assembly. Common Cause, in a cloud of embarrassment, fired him summarily. Spectators have been divided over whether to focus on the remarkable moral stance of the Assembly or on the humiliation of Common Cause. As in the Watergate scandal, hope competes with shame, and many lessons and adventures lie deeper in the tale.

## When the Saints Go Marching In

Common Cause was almost foreordained to fall into such a scrape, having staked out an identity so close to sainthood that human nature was bound to take revenge. For seven years—ever since John Gardner tried to rally America's remaining idealism in a single organization—Gardner, the personification and leader of Common Cause, has been associated in the press with two characteristic words: "concerned" and "decent." He is also earnest, professional, and above reproach. All these qualities drew hundreds of thousands of equally concerned people into the war against "politics as usual," corruption, secrecy, special interests, and the overall contrariness of "the system." ("Only an aroused and organized citizenry can revitalize The System and change the nation's disastrous course," reads the call to battle.)

Over the years, Common Cause has not been popular with the jaded press, which is always suspicious of groups with a Platonic cast. Reporters have written articles critical of the armchair-liberal nature of the membership, which is considered too well-off to be oppressed and too good to be effective. Gardner, unlike Ralph Nader, has never been the target of gumshoe-persecution from corporate moguls, and therefore he has not received the underdog's sympathy despite the heavy odds against his mission. Instead, some articles have taken Gardner to task for the plush, well-appointed environment he has created as the headquarters for the citizens' revolution. Common Cause never really captured the public imagination, but it was decent enough to be tolerated with mild criticism and mild expectations—at least before the Podell scandal. Now Common Cause has been deflowered. It may be good for the organization, but operatives both in Washington and in the field must be haunted by the symbolic dangers of the Podell case. John Gardner's dignified lineaments appear at testimonials and in photographs on millions of flyers and posters. The imagination has only to add a shapely leg, protruding from behind the studious pose, as a deflating reminder of the events in Albany.

The Assembly vote against Podell, 134 to 1, indicates the resounding

*Answers to June puzzle:*

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UPI Photo

Albert Podell

nature of the legislative voice that condemned his corrupt practices, but the vote alone does not show how much the representatives enjoyed the task. Although Common Cause had not dented the State Legislature's operations very much, it had become a thorn to its self-esteem—with reams of propaganda on the venality of politicians, who are always pictured as too old, too dishonest, and too short-sighted for polite company, let alone the affairs of state. Since even the worst of politicians considers himself in the mainstream of democracy, the entire premise of Common Cause was an insult and a source of resentment. Podell offered them an opportunity to fulfill their bitterest fantasies, with the tables spectacularly turned. How quickly they jumped at the chance to denounce a do-gooder for the same vices that Common Cause had long attributed to them. And who could blame them, under these delicious circumstances? Most people feel at least a quick rush of excitement at watching the moneylenders throw a pretending saint out of the temple.

## From *Playboy* To. . .

Albert Podell is the key to all these strange developments, of course. Some say he was personally unsuited to the job of lobbyist for good government, and it is certainly true that he took a circuitous route to the position. After graduating from Cornell University as a government major in 1958, Podell did some graduate work and then moved into the world of magazine journalism, where he served for a time as art director of *Playboy* and *Argosy*. In the mid-1960s, he contracted job claustrophobia and set off around the world on a record-breaking jeep trip. He wrote a book about his travels and then re-entered ordinary life as an advertising executive. Soon he became restless again, and Podell began to do volunteer work for Citizens Union, one of New York's oldest reform lobbies. According to its



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executive director, Gary Sperling, Citizens Union wanted to change its rather stodgy image, and Sperling did so by hiring Podell in 1973.

Podell was a whirlwind lobbyist, full of energy and savvy. Even his enemies concede that Podell was unusually articulate and hard working, especially for an advocate of clean government. His legislative friends admired his commitment, but some of them began to question Podell's manners. They winced when he sent out daily memos entitled "The Top Ten Turkeys on Today's Calendar." Some legislators objected that Podell was using threats and strong-arm tactics to push bills. Podell was undaunted and continued to subscribe to the maxim that "the end justifies the means" in battles with the entrenched powers in Albany.

## . . . To Common Cause

In January 1974 Podell created his first major controversy with Albany's legislative leadership, such as it is, with two sentences which grabbed public attention when they appeared as the lead for a story in the Albany *Times-Union*:

*"Some business-oriented lobbyists are not above taking steps to gratify a legislator's sexual requests in exchange for a vote," says Art [sic] Podell, who lobbies for the Citizens Union.*

*"And there are woman lobbyists who are not above using sexual wiles to accomplish their ends," Podell adds.*

When the furor erupted, Podell took the standard defense and claimed that he had been quoted out of context—he was not making specific charges against the lobbyists and lawmakers, he said, but only noting that their chicken-yard moral character made them capable of almost anything. Not surprisingly, this made things worse. Gary Sperling suspended Podell and demanded a full report. All four legislative leaders from Albany (Republicans Perry Duryea and John Kingston and Democrats Stanley Steingut and Albert Blumenthal) demanded and obtained audiences with Podell's superiors at Citizens Union. They wanted Sperling to fire Podell. He refused.

Sperling adopted what became Podell's best defensive argument—anyone who draws blood from the Runyonesque mob in Albany must be advancing the cause. No other Citizens Union lobbyist had brought the legislative chiefs howling *en masse* to Sperling's doorstep. Sperling reinstated Podell, but he felt obliged to keep close tabs on his obstreperous employee and grew weary of the pressure. "It was like having a living time bomb around," Sperling told *The New York Times*, so at the end of the session he discharged Podell.

After being dismissed, Podell offered his services to the New York State chapter of Common Cause. Podell stayed on the offensive, challenging Common Cause to prove itself an organization that would not "be intimidated every time Perry Duryea calls up." Common Cause rose to the occasion, and Podell went back to work. "We knew in general what Al's conduct was with Citizens Union," Phoebe Bender, state chairwoman of Common Cause, said after the time bomb went off. Before Podell was hired, she said, "He assured us that he had seen the error of his ways."

As was the case with Citizens Union, Common Cause soon began to receive complaints about Podell's tactics. And as with Citizens Union, Common Cause chalked them up to the backward resistance of legislators who were balking at reforms. Then came the confession.

## Confessions of a Lobbyist

On February 11, 1975, the American Society for Public Administration sponsored a panel discussion on the ethical issues involved in lobbying. The panel included Assemblyman K. Daniel Haley (D-St. Lawrence, N.Y.), Gerald L. Conway, a lobbyist for finance and medical groups, and


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Albert Podell. Mario Cuomo, the New York Secretary of State, served as moderator. He is responsible for enforcing the state's lobbying laws.

Carol Chady, a reporter for the Albany *Knickerbocker News-Union*, covered the discussion. When Podell learned that she was present, he asked her not to print his remarks. Chady refused Podell's retroactive request and the story ran that afternoon:

*Confessions of a lobbyist were on the breakfast menu for some 200 members of the Capital District Chapter, American Society for Public Administration. . . .*

*"By certain standards I might be considered one of the most unethical lobbyists in Albany," [Podell] told the gathering. . . . But he said "I think these were things which helped clean up the state."*

*He gave these illustrations:*

*Because it was crucial to know what was going on in the Assembly speaker's office, he spotted a staffer with an eye for women. He said he arranged a meeting with a young woman and a series of dates resulted. "And I had an incredibly good pipeline into the speaker's office," he said. He added that private lobbyists would never use that approach and "I leave it to you whether I went overboard. . . ."*

*In lobbying for a bill to provide contraceptives for persons under 16, he said he "found two 15-year-old young ladies and I trained them as a team to do lobbying." He described one as virginal and the other as tough-talking, and said they succeeded in switching the votes of four legislators.*

*When he learned that Patrick Cunningham of the Bronx, now Democratic State Chairman, was reported to be in Albany, he posed as an Allegheny Airlines ticket agent and called Cunningham's office to ask confirmation that he was in Albany. Next he posed as an aide in Cunningham's office and telephoned the office of former Assembly Speaker Perry Duryea to check the time of a meeting between Cunningham and Duryea.*

*He later questioned Cunningham about the meeting and said the result was "big headlines and the deal was dead" as far as an arrangement on a primary election date. "I felt it was in the public interest. . . but I did tell a couple of lies."*

## Piety As Usual

Podell, sensing danger, laid low, as the crisis gripped the New York office of Common Cause, sending waves of anxiety down to the Washington headquarters. Phoebe Bender and her colleagues made a few phone calls to confirm the story and then fired Podell by telephone. Common Cause quickly issued a press release, branding Podell's methods as "totally unacceptable when used by any lobbyist. Common Cause finds them repugnant." Summoning up the standard Common Cause language, the release went on to declare that Podell's tactics were "the tools of those who practice 'politics as usual.' They are not the implements of advocates of open and accountable government." Bender later said that she was "appalled," adding "I wish I could apologize personally to all our 43,000 members in the state."

There is some dispute about whether Common Cause got to Podell before or after the New York Assembly denounced him. Podell claims that Common Cause fired him after the vote, in a pitiful genuflection to the wishes of the corrupt legislators. The true story is unclear, because the race was so close. Within hours after the newspapers hit the stands, Perry Duryea called up his resolution of denunciation on the floor of the Assembly. Feelings were running high.

Duryea had been the longtime Speaker of the Assembly before being reduced to Minority Leader after the Democrats won control in the 1974 elections. Although he was still a man of immense influence in the Assembly, Duryea's qualifications to lead the attack on Podell were open to question, since Duryea had only recently escaped a brush with the law.


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He and several cohorts were indicted in December 1973, charged with participation in an old-style vote-siphoning scheme. Duryea never went through the ignominy of trial, because his case was dismissed on grounds that the state election law is unduly vague. *The New York Times* sensed that such vagueness was intentional and self-protective on the part of the Albany legislators, who spent years riddling the law with "obscurities, loopholes, and constitutional flaws. . . . " Nevertheless, Duryea received a hero's welcome when he returned to the Assembly in triumph over the do-gooders in the prosecutor's office.

On the day of the Podell resolution, Duryea again rode the crest of legislative sentiment. After distributing copies of the Chady article, he delivered a passionate attack on Podell's hypocrisy, pausing only to note that no legislator had ever fallen for a Podell trick or become implicated in his intrigues. Duryea concluded his call for censure with a flourish: "We stand for public office, and we take the slings and arrows, whatever they are, and we go before the people and we face the issues. We don't need this kind of nonsense ever. Two hundred million people in this nation are going to know that Common Cause hired a pimp to represent them in New York State!" He received a standing ovation.

Speaker Stanley Steingut quickly recognized Majority Leader Albert Blumenthal for an equally strong statement. (Both these men have been deeply implicated in press reports regarding New York's latest big scandal—the nursing home racket, in which a coalition of politicians, gangsters, and entrepreneurs have allegedly robbed old people of health, comfort, and a great deal of cash. They have not been indicted.) By the time Blumenthal finished his speech, several liberal Assembly members were worried that Podell's civil liberties were about to be trampled, since the Assembly, like Common Cause, was about to take precipitous action without so much as a hearing or any other opportunity for Podell to defend himself. Democrat Frank Barbaro rose to declare that he felt a "lynch mob atmosphere" on the Assembly floor, and he likened the legislative mood to that in the final chapter of *The Ox-Bow Incident*. Several other members echoed this theme, causing the liberals to caucus among themselves. They managed to gain some satisfaction from a compromise: Duryea's wording was changed so that the Assembly would "register disapproval of" Podell, and not "censure" him. This measure assured the nearly unanimous vote against Podell.

## It's All A Plot

The following Monday, Podell called a press conference and availed himself of some of the standard defensive techniques for politicians in trouble. (He left a few in reserve for the unlikely event of his indictment and trial.) First, he pictured himself as the victim of a cruel and cynical purge. Duryea, he said, "has had a vendetta against me since the second week I was up here because I have campaigned very strongly against the dictatorial way he ran the Assembly." Second, he described his controversial activities as part of his campaign for the public interest. The leaders of the Assembly, he said, "don't like the idea that there's somebody running around trying to rock the boat." Third, he threatened to file a slander suit against Duryea, challenging the Minority Leader to call him a "pimp" off the Assembly floor, "where he is not hiding behind the cowardly cloak of legislative immunity. That bastard will not do that." Fourth, he explained that he had not meant what he said in the speech—the girls, the lies, and so forth—but had made up the stories for heuristic purposes to further the discussion of lobbying ethics. He was trying to teach the citizens, he said, in the tradition of John Gardner. Finally, Podell pulled out his strongest


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argument—that his behavior was no worse than most lobbyists'. Noting his unique position in Assembly infamy, he declared, "I am not the worst person who has ever been up here in 30 years."

Here Podell was unquestionably on solid ground. In one recent newspaper series alone—the one in which Podell had been quoted—reporters detailed the scurrilous activities of many lobbyists, some in and out of jail, others who should be in jail. One operative for the banking industry was reported to have said, "I don't buy legislators dinners. I buy legislators." A man from the liquor industry offered a similar comment. None of these lobbyists was subjected to the wrath of the Assembly; they run in the pack. On the other hand, none of these lobbyists makes public speeches about his deviltry or leads a crusade against the rottenness of the system.

Podell's reasons for committing political suicide on a soapbox are still a mystery. His ego is considered fulsome, and several observers say he needed to show that he really knew where the bodies were buried and how to operate in the back room. His friends have compared him to the frontier preacher who reluctantly put on a six-gun to drive out the reprobates and sinners. Others say he is a man grown sick of bland virtue, needing a charge from the nether-world of power—something like the academic economist who feels weak until he can use his theories to mine gold in the stock market.

No one really knows about Podell. But there is a slim possibility that he may have outfoxed the creatures in the legislature—using himself as bait to make them pontificate so virtuously against corrupt lobbying that they will have to pass Common Cause's model lobbying law. In that case, Common Cause would have the best of both worlds—ruthlessness and idealism—and might become as legendary as the CIA. And Albert Podell might smile over these things on his next jeep trip around the world. ■


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# Tidbits

## Nice Work, Ben!

We are sure readers will join us in sending congratulations to Ben Bradlee, the executive editor of *The Washington Post*, on the brisk sales of his new book, *Conversations with Kennedy*. Things got off on the right foot early this year, when *Newsweek*, which is, coincidentally, owned by the *Post*, devoted a full page of its National section to an enthusiastic preview of the book. In April, all of Bradlee's subordinates at the *Post* were invited to a reception and given a chance to buy the boss' book (at a $3.05 discount, as reported by the *Washington Star*). Then, in May, excerpts from the book were published every day for a week on the front page of the paper's Style section, an unusual gesture from a newspaper that virtually never serializes books. It was the kind of promotional break every author dreams of getting, and it has paid off; when Bradlee sold the paperback rights to the book, they went for half a million dollars.

Now reporters on the paper, who have for the last few years been pushed to the far extremes of investigative reporting by the Woodward-Bernstein model of the way to get ahead, must ponder the example of their boss, who, by releasing his memoirs of being too close to a politician, has made as much money as his reporters will in 20 years.

## The Assembly Line

While ordinarily sympathetic to the conservative viewpoint that the victims of crime deserve more protection than the criminals, we were dismayed by a recent report from the D.C. Superior Court. During a one-year period, a total of 11 attorneys were appointed by the court to handle 657 felony cases and 636 misdemeanors for indigent clients. The judges of the Superior Court, many of whom are Nixon appointees with a prosecutorial bias, know that by swamping the attorneys with a grotesque overload of cases, they will encourage guilty pleas and prevent difficult briefs from being filed.

## The Founder Would Be Proud

Amid tough competition, *Time* magazine has emerged as an easy winner of the "Remember the Maine" award for its coverage of the Mayaguez affair. First of all was Hugh Sidey's now-legendary column, which set the proper tone of masculinity-proved-through-victory with comments like "House Speaker Carl Albert, five feet five inches tall, seemed at least five feet eight inches tall as he pondered American prestige on the White House steps," and "The *Mayaguez* and the crew were ours again. So was a dollop of pride. The message was ringing around the world. The admirals and generals lifted their heads a little higher."

Enlarging on its thesis that the world was awed by American determination, *Time* quoted a newspaper called the Bangkok *World* as a barometer of Thai opinion, without bothering to mention that the paper is the English-speaking journal in Thailand and represents official Thai viewpoints about as well as the *International Herald Tribune* speaks for France. In a special footnote, *Time* reminded its readers that the crew members of another captured American ship, the *Pueblo*, had been "savagely tortured" and "forced to sign false confessions that they had been spying for the CIA," without making clear that the *Pueblo* actually was a floating espionage system and had come close to the North Korean shore.

Finally, in a touch that suggested that Henry Luce was writing from on high, *Time* said that a group of Marines was "disappointed" when, rifles at the ready, they climbed aboard the Mayaguez and found that the sneaky Cambodians had disappeared only moments before. The only sort of "disappointment" this calls to mind is that of John Wayne in the movie *The Green Berets*, reassuring his squad that although the gooks slipped away from them today, they'll have a chance to blow them apart tomorrow.



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# and Outrages

**'A Goddamn Big Army. . . .'**

In the June issue, this magazine published an article, "Wedding Presents, Cigars, and Deference," about Nick Zapple, the chief counsel for the Senate Communications Subcommittee. Soon after our article appeared, *Broadcasting*, the industry trade journal, ran a story in its June 9 issue headlined "Zapple Era About to End."

Nicholas Zapple, chief counsel to the Senate Communications Subcommittee for 25 years, five years longer than Senator John Pastore (D-R.I.) has been chairman, announced his retirement last week, effective June 30. In the same week he was the subject of a lead story of the *Washington Monthly* portraying his service as less than exemplary.

The formal announcement of Mr. Zapple's retirement came from Senator Warren Magnuson (D-Wash.), chairman of the parent Senate Commerce Committee. In a brief statement Senator Magnuson said Mr. Zapple has "rendered very important service to the work of the Congress and the nation. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to replace his unique expert knowledge of the intricate field of broadcasting and telecommunications, coupled with his intimate knowledge of the legislative process."

But the *Washington Monthly* account, authored by one of the magazine's editors, Thomas Redburn, called Mr. Zapple, with no flattery intended, "one of the more anonymous holders of power in Washington," "almost *the* central figure" to people engaged in the politics of broadcast regulation. According to the story, Mr. Zapple has used his position at times to "go beyond the legislative intent of Congress" in writing reports on committee legislation, undermining the "more public-spirited provisions" of last year's license renewal bill, for example, to favor the interests of broadcasters, "an already rich and important group." Mr. Redburn also said Mr. Zapple has used his influence to make "constant, petty demands of the people he deals with." According to the story, Mr. Zapple accepted, even solicited, such gifts as cigars and steaks, champagne and a turkey for his daughter's wedding, and a $1,000 silver service columnist Jack Anderson reported he received from a broadcaster in trouble with the FCC. But Mr. Redburn added that "what seems to motivate Zapple is not the value of the gifts, but the recognition of importance and power they represent. . . . "

Broadcasting officials whom *Broadcasting* talked to in Washington defended Mr. Zapple's record against the Redburn article's implications. Said Peter Kenney, Washington vice president for NBC: "If you start counting all the people in this town who take cigars and dinners, you would have a goddamn big army." He said he knew no one else on Capitol Hill with Mr. Zapple's background and knowledge in broadcasting. The sentiment was echoed by Richard Jencks, vice president for CBS. "His knowledge of the industry and broadcasting will be missed," Mr. Jencks said. Eugene Cowen, Washington vice president for ABC, called Mr. Zapple a "fine public servant" who has always been "very fair. . . . " Another broadcast executive in Washington said Mr. Zapple does have a reputation for being a "sponger," but he did not find that unique in Washington. . . . The broadcaster who chose to remain nameless said "you always had to be nice" to Mr. Zapple to lessen the chance that he would have a "negative" influence on industry-related legislation, but on the other hand, "he never did do us much good in the way of legislation. . . . "

For himself, Mr. Zapple said the Redburn article was a "hatchet job." "I stand on my record of 30 years," he said. . . . Was Mr. Zapple's retirement hastened by the *Washington Monthly* account? Mr. Zapple said he had notified his employers as much as a month before the story appeared. If the story was being prepared at that time, Mr. Zapple said, he was not aware of it. "I'm sorry it [the article] came out at this time," he said. . . .

We can't help being struck by Peter Kenney's comment, "If you start counting all the people in this town who take cigars and dinners, you would have a goddamn big army." It is refreshing to know that an NBC vice president is so free to admit that Zapple is not an isolated phenomenon. Of course, our original article wasn't just about cigars and dinners, but more serious abuses as well. Many of the facts in the story had long been known by lobbyists and reporters who cover broadcasting. But because of the peculiar journalistic mindset which assumes that anything which all reporters know is no longer news, these facts were kept from the general public until the twilight of Zapple's career.

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# The Air Force's Secret War On Unemployment

by Peter J. Ognibene

Time was when a code of honor prevailed between the Pentagon and Capitol Hill. If you were a general or an admiral with a weapons system to promote, you felt obliged to make the gesture of warning about the dangers of unpreparedness. If your new nuclear missiles were designed to obliterate half of Central Asia, you were expected to take the trouble of planting a few news stories and handing congressmen a few prepared speeches about the Peril from the East. Everybody knew the rules, and it was a comfortable arrangement for all involved.

Even now a few people keep the tradition alive, most notably the current Secretary of Defense, James Schlesinger, whose congressional testimony suggests that he has taken on Oswald Spengler as a speechwriter. But elsewhere in the defense establishment, the old ways are changing, and with them the style of military logrolling. When the Pentagon pushes weapons systems these days, it gives the same argument Detroit offers for its cars: Buy Now, not because you need the product, but because people are out of work. The B-1 bomber program, which occupied Congress' attention this spring, is the clearest example of this new look in American militarism.

The purpose of the B-1 is to deliver nuclear bombs to targets in the Soviet Union, in case the Minuteman missiles and Polaris-Poseidon submarines should somehow fail to accomplish that task. This is a function which many people feel is quite adequately performed by the current fleet of B-52 bombers, and which, in any case, becomes quite expensive when performed by B-1s. In the six years since the Air Force made its planning estimates, the projected cost of each plane has risen from $36 million to $85 million, and may go higher still. The total cost of the B-1 system, with its 241 bombers, 300-odd tankers, new avionics, maintenance, and the like, may easily exceed $50 billion.

The genius of the B-1 promoters was to realize that these monumental costs, which had proven such an impediment to weapons proposals in the past, could actually be turned into the plane's strongest selling point. In the offices of Rockwell International,

*Peter J. Ognibene is a contributing editor of* The New Republic.



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the primary contractor for the B-1, someone discovered that the offending word "cost" could be restated as "jobs," and that the B-1 could be portrayed as the $50-billion solution to the unemployment problem. The $2 billion already spent on the plane has meant contracts and jobs for more than 5,000 businesses in 48 states, and more money would mean more wealth for all.

The approach of Rockwell lobbyists to one of the bomber's best-informed critics, Representative John F. Seiberling (D-Ohio), is a classic illustration of the soft sell that more and more defense contractors are learning to adopt.

The city of Akron, which accounts for much of Seiberling's district, annually gets $75 million to $100 million in defense business for items such as aircraft wheels, brakes, tires, and tank tracks. Another local plant, General Electric of Evendale, is building the engines for the B-1. So both the state and district would apparently "benefit" from a decision to produce the plane.

The charts and papers Rockwell's lobbyists brought to Seiberling's office said curiously little about the B-1's military purpose. Rather, they read like a justification for a government make-work project in the tradition of the WPA or Lyndon Johnson's Great Society. Two paragraphs from the section entitled "National Economic Impact" convey the flavor as well as the substance of the company's pitch:

"Throughout the United States 26,000 people are now gainfully employed directly on the B-1 program and more than 44,000 additional supporting non-aerospace jobs make for a national total of over 70,000 jobs today. A B-1 production go-ahead would mean over 69,000 direct aerospace jobs and 192,000 total jobs at program maturity.

"Most people look only at the money the Government spends—and nothing else. If we look at B-1 funding in the context of the total economy—as a businessman looks at the return on his gross investment, we find that the $2.7-billion development phase and the $8.6-billion production phase would add over $31 billion to the Gross National Product including over $25 billion in personal income, and would add or support 192,000 jobs at all levels in our nation's economy. This work force, if unemployed, would become 'tax users' instead of


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taxpayers capable of supporting our domestic peacetime priorities. To cut back the nation's expanding work force would be like trying to stuff the 'Eagle' back into its egg. The tax receipts from this gainful and productive B-1 employment should exceed $9.4 billion. This is the return on the Government's gross investment that could be used to support our domestic programs. Crediting this to the B-1, the net investment for national security would probably be less than $1.9 billion! This is aside from the primary purpose of the B-1 as Peacekeeper—you can't put a price tag on peace."

Someone who had never heard of the plane would be hard-pressed indeed to figure out just what a B-1 is if all he had to go on was this company blurb. Except for the vague references to "national security" and the "Peacekeeper," there are no clues which would lead one to conclude that the B-1 is a nuclear weapons carrier. And that seems to be just the sort of impression Rockwell would like to create among legislators: don't think of the B-1 as a weapon of mass destruction, think of it as a "program" whose "gross investment" will create "jobs" and turn the "unemployed" into "taxpayers capable of supporting our domestic peacetime priorities."

When Rockwell turned from the national impact of the B-1 to its effect on Ohio, the Job Corps rhetoric was supplanted by the sound of the sloshing pork barrel:

"A B-1 production go-ahead would ensure approximately $1.45 billion of firm production business in addition to the current $400-million prototype engine program, and would present additional potential of $585 million of airplane and subsystem business in Ohio. This total Ohio business input of almost $2.5 billion could, in turn, generate approximately $6.6 billion gross state product, including $4.6 billion disposable income, $790 million state and local tax receipts in support of Ohio's domestic priorities and $1.3 billion federal tax receipts in support of the nation's domestic priorities. This is the long term economic potential for Ohio if the B-1 production program reaches maturity as currently planned."

By the time Rockwell got down to Seiberling's district, its lobbyists were practically counting the nickels and dimes involved in contracts for main and nose gear tires, impact attenuators, crew capsule flotation devices, and wheel and brake assemblies. The contracts to local firms were listed in five-, six-, and seven-place figures down to the last dollar for the research and development program.

With that for an appetizer, Rockwell then served up its main course:

"A B-1 production go-ahead would present a potential of approximately $60 million new business in Ohio's 14th district. This is in addition to the $10,527,345 B-1 prototype business. The 14th district's total B-1 program potential of $70.5 million could, in turn, generate $133 million disposable personal income (after tax). In other words, you don't have to 'cut metal' on the B-1 in order to benefit from it."

Unfortunately for Rockwell, Seiberling was not impressed. "We also made a study," he told me, "and found that the actual amount of B-1 funds going into our district was less than the taxes paid. Seventy million dollars was being spent for jobs and such, but the district was paying about $84 million out of its taxes for the B-1. So we were really coming out of it $14 million shy."

Stated that way, it sounds as if Seiberling would come around if only Rockwell could find $15 million more for the businessmen of Akron. In fact, he had quite a different objection in mind, one which challenges the fundamentals of the porkbarreling approach: "We're short of capital in this country," he said, "and defense procurement does not produce many jobs. There are fewer jobs per billion dollars in defense, and except for California and Texas, most states suffer


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unemployment as a result of defense spending."

Behind Seiberling's contention are calculations like that of a study, "The Empty Pork Barrel,"* conducted by the Public Interest Research Group in Michigan (PIRGIM). Using a means of analysis conceived by Bruce Russett, a professor of economics at Yale, the group calculated that each additional billion dollars spent on the military results in a *net loss* of 10,000 jobs nationwide. A billion dollars spent in the defense industrial sector produces about 55,000 direct and supporting jobs; but if that billion had been left in the private sector, it would have created 65,000 jobs. So, spending, say, $5 billion a year on the B-1, its operation, and support, would mean 50,000 fewer jobs in this country. Coincidentally, Rockwell's calculations of direct and supporting jobs per billion dollars spent on the B-1 closely approximate the PIRGIM figure.

"I think the people in this country are finally catching on that you don't create jobs by spending on defense," says Seiberling. He's right—except about those places which, unlike Akron, stand to take in more money from defense expenditures than they lose in taxes or private business. Many of those places are in California, and California's most liberal legislators have embraced the Rockwell thesis with unseemly enthusiasm. Consider, for example, the conduct of California's two senators, Alan Cranston and John Tunney. The over-all voting records of both are ranked high in the ratings compiled by the liberal Americans for Democratic Action and low in those of the conservative American Security Council, which has extensive connections with defense industrialists. Yet when the B-1 was under attack last year by cost-conscious liberals, the two men took to the Senate floor in tandem to celebrate its many virtues.

Cranston restricted himself to a hymn of praise for Rockwell's management of the program, but Tunney delved into the intricacies of macro-economics. Using an economic calculus remarkably similar to that of the Rockwell propaganda sheets, Tunney argued: "A gross investment of $13.6 billion during the life of the program could generate a rise in the GNP of approximately $37 billion, which in turn would be a function of over 60,000 aerospace jobs and over 100,000 supporting jobs throughout the country. Workers thus employed could return, in the form of taxes, approximately $7 billion to the federal government and an additional $4 billion to state and local governments. These tax dollars can be used to fund such vital domestic needs as schools and hospitals."

Although it was little noticed by the press at the time, Tunney had clearly hit on the solution to one of the major problems of our time. Disease, illiteracy, unemployment, and Russians, too, will all yield to the mighty B-1. ■

*Available from P.I.R.G.I.M., 615 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing, MI 48933, for 25 cents a copy.


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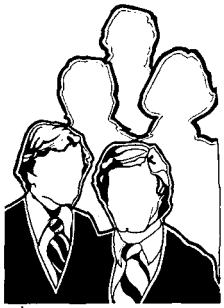

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# political book notes

*Public affairs books to be published in July and August*

**Agricultural Research and Productivity.** Robert E. Evenson, Yoav Kislev. Yale, $12.50/3.95.

**The Beat Inflation Strategy.** Roger Klein, William Wolman. Simon & Schuster, $7.95. The most sensible of the recent spate of economic how-to-survive guides, relying neither on Harry Browne's Social Darwinism nor on the on-track gimmickry of the goldbugs. The authors, investment analysts, explain economic principles rather than oversimplifying them. They contend that inflation will be a permanent feature of the American economy, and that by learning to foresee the predictable stages of the inflationary cycle, the investor can come out ahead. When the inflation rate is rising, they recommend commodities and other tangible assets; when it is falling, bonds and common stock.

**Behind the Middle East Conflict.** Gil Carl AlRoy. Putnam's, $7.95.

**Career of a Radical Rightist: A Study in Failure.** Scott G. McNall. Kennikat, $12.50.

**The Case Against Direct Election of the President: A Defense of the Electoral College.** Judith Best. Cornell Univ. Press, $9.95. For those who thought there was no method to the madness of the electoral college, Judith Best has pulled together all the statements that can be made on its behalf. Most of them are comparative-advantage arguments against the direct election system, the only reform with a chance of being adopted. Few of her insights are novel; and, because she fails to deal convincingly with the main defect of the electoral college—the unequal weights it assigns to voters in different states—she is unlikely to change many minds. The book's style, often dissertation-like in its dryness, will also deter the casual reader. Still, it has value as a compendium of the evidence.

**The Design of Federal Employment Programs.** Laurence S. Seidman, Lexington.

**The Educated Woman: Prospects and Problems.** Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry. Scribner's, $7.95.

**Federal Programs and City Politics.** Jeffrey L. Pressman. Univ. of California Press, $10.

**The Federal Rathole.** Donald Lambro. Arlington House, $7.95. From an unlikely source, the right-wing publishing house whose books sometimes have the same reasonable tone as the SDS pamphlets of yesteryear, comes one of the more stimulating political books of the year. Lambro, a reporter for United Press International, points out that federal, state, and local taxes, which together consumed 20 per cent of total income in 1940, today account for 40 per cent. As a step in the other direction, he proposes elimination of 50 federal programs, for a total savings of $25 billion. The largest single reduction would come from the revenue-sharing program, at $16 billion; most of the others are a few million apiece. Now and then those who disagree with Lambro's ideology will question his recommendations—for example, blanket elimination of legal services, his hostility toward research of all sorts, and the absence of any reduction in military weaponry. But all in all his recommendations are well argued and soundly documented, and provide a reminder that some of the things that "need to be done" don't need to be done by the federal government.

**Federalism and Clear Waters: The 1972 Water Pollution Control Act.** Harvey Lieber. Lexington.

**Fiscal Zoning and Land Use Controls.** Edwin Mills, Wallace Oates, eds. Lexington.



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**From the Diaries of Felix Frankfurter.** Essays and notes by Joseph P. Lash. Norton, $12.50. Worth reading, if only for the introductory essay by Lash, which follows Frankfurter's meteoric rise from the Lower East Side to the Court. With the type of psychological insight that he has demonstrated in his previous works, Lash traces the effects of Frankfurter's immigrant upbringing, his domineering mother, his sheer delight in moving in the highest circles of power, and the ever-present awareness of his Semitism. Most interesting is Lash's explanation of how Frankfurter shifted from activism off the Court to a Holmesian reluctance while on the Court. The letters themselves are largely gossipy.

**How to Choose and Use Your Doctor.** Marvin Belsky, M.D. Arbor House, $7.95.

**Law for You.** Foster Furcolo. Acropolis, $7.95/3.50.

**The Law of War.** Richard I. Miller. Lexington.

**A Little Group of Willful Men: A Study of Congressional/Presidential Authority.** Thomas W. Ryley. Kennikat, $12.95.

**Luciano: The Man Who Modernized the American Mafia.** Tony Sciacca. Pinnacle, $1.75.

**Many Sovereign States.** Dan Lufkin. McKay, $7.75. A dull tale of the experiences which led Connecticut's first commissioner of environmental protection to conclude that federal power should be curtailed and shifted to the states. It is filled with insights such as: "The states are rooted deep in the American consciousness. We can sing 'My Country 'tis of Thee.' We can even fight and die for the United States. But the sense of belonging to a piece of that continent labeled Maine or Illinois goes as deep, or deeper." Although he points out, correctly, the corruption and inflexibility of the federal government, he generalizes too broadly about the improved quality of government at the state level, a conclusion which recent evidence from Maryland, New Jersey, and Florida, among others, causes one to doubt. He also recommends greatly expanded programs of revenue sharing, which would give the states more power to act without making them bear the responsibility of raising their own taxes.

**N.Y.S.E.: A History of The New York Stock Exchange.** Robert Sobel. Weybright & Talley, $15.

**On Socialist Democracy.** Roy A. Medvedev. Knopf, $12.50.

**Peroff: The Man Who Knew Too Much.** L. H. Whittemore. Morrow, $9.95.

**The Police in Society.** Emilio C. Viano, Jeffrey H. Reiman, eds. Lexington.


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**Polish-American Politics in Chicago, 1888-1940.** Edward R. Kantowitz. Univ. of Chicago, $12.95.

**The Politics of Extinction: The Shocking Story of the World's Endangered Wildlife.** Lewis Regenstein. Macmillan. Although the literature of despoliation has reached numbing and often boring proportions, this is one book that retains the capacity to shock. The author, a vice president of the Fund for Animals, describes not only the natural history of endangered species from the grizzly bear to the kangaroo, but also the political background in Congress and the executive branch that has thwarted efforts at preservation.

**The Politics of the Property Tax.** Diane B. Paul. Lexington.

**Reaper: The Inside Story of a Gang Leader.** Gary Hoenig. Bobbs-Merrill, $6.95.

**Red, White and Blue-Collar Views: A Steelworker Speaks His Mind About America.** Michael LaVelle. Saturday Review Press, $7.95.

**The Remarkable Life of Dr. Armand Hammer.** Bob Considine. Harper & Row. While written in a breezy, *Parade* magazine style ("There are several paths to the heart and pocketbook of Ivan, that proud and sometimes perverse Communist"), this biography of the grand entrepreneur of the modern era is quite thoroughly researched and generally entertaining. Ironically, the book's main effect is to whet one's appetite for a more thoughtful examination of the Armand Hammer story.

**Revolution in Cuba.** Herbert Matthews. Scribner's, $15.

**The Rights of Gays: An American Civil Liberties Union Handbook.** E. Carrington Boggan, et. al. Avon, $1.75.

**Sam Rayburn: A Biography.** Alfred Steinberg. Hawthorn, $15.

**Vital Signs: A Doctor Examines His Profession.** Jean Bernard. Macmillan, $8.95.

**Voter's Choice: Varieties of American Electoral Behavior.** Gerald Pomper. Dodd, Mead, $10.

**Washington Now.** Austin Kiplinger and Knight A. Kiplinger. Harper & Row, $12.95. Arthur and Knight Kiplinger (of *Kiplinger Letter* renown) have compiled a massive and simplistic encyclopedia on Washington, D.C. A hybrid cross between a high-school government text and a local travel guide, this 450-page volume simplifies the most complex of issues—two brief pages, for instance, devoted to a homily on "how Watergate could have happened." The authors' lack of imagination is demonstrated in their chapter on important people in town, which starts with the President and works down the government-organization chart to the agency heads, without considering any of the unofficial forces—in lobbying, the law, and the press—who shape the life of the city.

**With Fidel: A Portrait of Castro and Cuba.** Frank Mankiewicz, Kirby Jones. Playboy, $8.95. At a time when more than 20 groups were trying to arrange an audience with Fidel Castro, Mankiewicz and Jones were granted exclusive rights to the first American interview, as well as a guided tour of the island. They visited Cuba three times, twice in 1974 and once in 1975. Given the magnitude of their scoop, one would have thought that the book would be terrifically interesting and informative. It is not. The authors kept feeding Castro unimaginative questions ("Looking at the U.S. political and economic system, what do you think is in store for the future?"), the answers to which could have been found in any socialist primer. On other areas of interest—the life of the Cuban people, their standards of living—we do not get enough. When the authors do communicate their first-hand observations on these facets of daily life, the book is at its best. Fidel is portrayed as the ideal composite of lion and lamb, known by all, loved by all, not isolated by the power of his office. (We learn that he likes daiquiris tall and cool, but not whether he is married or goes out at all.)


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